

2010

Commonthought (2010)

Commonthought Staff

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COM MON THOU GHT

Art

Poetry

Short Stories

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Commonthought is a celebration of the creative endeavors of Lesley University and The Art Institute of Boston.

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Foreword

I heard it suggested this past semester that college literary journals like ours, *Commonthought*, are not “real” magazines. This came to me through the grapevine, so I didn’t have a chance to ask for elaboration, or to defend the work that my students and I were doing in Doble Hall every Monday and Wednesday morning. But, even if I had been there, if someone had said this to my face, I’m not sure how I would have responded. I think I would have stood there, flabbergasted, and been lucky to manage an “Are you kidding me?”

Just before sitting down to make final pass through this issue of *Commonthought*, I was reading Andre Dubus’s *Meditations from a Movable Chair*. Most of the essays in this collection have to do with how life changed for Dubus following the 1986 accident that put him in the eponymous chair, but there is an essay titled “First Books” that I would love to have had on hand for the argument about what makes a literary journal “real.”

In the essay, Dubus describes a 1975 conversation he had with the novelist Mark Smith.

He said publishers used to buy a writer’s talent, hoping that the writer’s fourth or fifth book would sell enough copies to earn money. He said: “Now they want money with the first book.”

This was in 1975! Just think of how much worse off the young writer is today, with the publishing industry in serious decline and the majors more than ever betting only on sure things. This is true of book publishing, and it is also true of magazines.

The young writer must start somewhere, and I believe it is the job of the college literary journal to provide the young writer with that start. Fewer and fewer outlets are willing to play this role because, financially speaking, fewer and fewer can afford to. But we can.

For the reader like you, journals like ours are a place to discover exciting new writing from invigorating new voices. We are proud to print within these pages over one hundred pages of new work by students, faculty, and alumni alike. The genres of poetry and short fiction are well-represented as always, but we are also pleased to include two works of narrative nonfiction, a short dramatic work, and pages of stunning visual art.

Enjoy.

E. Christopher Clark

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The Might of Might

Jennifer Leavey

You might think
that this poem will
be full of angst
because I have
blonde hair
and breasts,

and every other word
will either be “hatred”
or “heartbreak”

and that I’ll be in
love with
artistically inserting
“fuck” in
every
single
stanza.

You might think that
I’ll read these words
at an open mic in Central Square
in flowing gypsy skirts
to the muted accompaniment
of an Ani DiFranco CD—

that I’ll rant and rave about
past loves and losses
because I have a vagina
and that means
my nom de plume is Anne Sexton
and my job is to write forced,
overwrought verse.

Your thoughts are all wrong—

but I am angry.

Tremble, Treble Clef:
you pace down this five-lined plank,
seesawing back and forth
while those very waves
paw up at my ship.

La, Ti and Da
were pushed down savagely
on the vertical downturn of Bass Clef
into the darkest, murkiest depths
of music theory.

Do, Re and Mi
cast off so brutally, O
from the ship’s leeward side
yet their loot remains on board, the high
octave screams echo.

Artificial harmonic,
all this rose in pitch as the chords clenched
the Treble Clef. And in
crescendo, Fermata teased
the deck, its on point of rest.

Fermata’s first mate
Metronome pulled back the plank beneath
Treble Clef’s feet;
accent pressures—
his last notes called out

as H₂O filled up his diaphragm
he shouted out *altissimo*.

High Seas (Tremolo)

Marcella Muscatell

Five AM is a fah reach. Even tha sun has yet ta make an appearance t'day. Eyes feel heavy an' m' back stahts ta hurt. Two hours ta go an' it ain't lookin' cleah if U'm gonna make it.

I hold m' pill bottle in both hands, not lookin' at it, but not makin' an effort not ta. Ta be real about this U'm not really in any state'a mind ta focus on anythin' besides tha blur; not yet anyway.

No I sit at tha kitchen table suspended in an insomniac haze. I must look like fuckin hell; caught my raflection an hour ago, complete with bruised eyes an' pale skin. My heaht has come down ta a slow but poundin' rate; two days an' U'm still goin' strong.

"Hi my name is ____ and I'm an amphetamine king." I hallucinate quietly ta m'self as I loose my grip on my scrip bottle. They hit tha floah with a rattle an' settle att'a chaos. M' motah skills ah stahtin ta go; I hope this won't effect my ability to drive or operate heavy machinery.

One'a my seven'y-hits is stahin' at me. That little blue an' orange capsule is fah too legal an' deadly. A full foahly-eight hoahs ain't even hahd ta do anymoah.

Thanks Ma. Thanks Dad. I hope tha straight As an' college education makes up foah all'a this.

Late night HBO an' second rate indie films have become my nocturnal religion. Don't worry U'm allowed ta worship outside'a m' bottle at night.

All hail the king of the trinity. His sermon is goin' ta begin soon; I don't want to be late.

"Ah seven-O'five, fancy meetin' you at this time'a day. How's tha Mrs.?"

A few months ago I stahtid ta decompose again. Beginning tha second countdown ta insanity in three yeahs. It's slow but it'll leave some real dents. Kinda' like a do-it-yaself project.

Dive in head first.

Abandon tha desiah ta eat.

Stop sleepin all tagetha.

Increase nicotine intake an' triple tha caffeine ta match.

Pop a pill, chase it with coffee an' I would recomend a smoke or three ta go with it. Anythin' ta pass tha next few houahs bafoah my daily pharmaceutical kick in the ass.

Side effects may (will) include loss'a appetite, increased blood pressure, increased heaht rate, anxiety, mania, altered bio-chemistry, restlessness, difficulty fallin' asleep, difficulty stayin'

asleep, full blown insomnia an' chemical dependency.

If ya experience any'a these, you'll love it and write them off immediately.

Half an houah in an' I already feelin' it. This baron stomach'a mine's gotta be free-basin' this shit. Tha discomfit'a boahda line stahvation is bein' phased out. Food is expensive and always ends up shit anyway. Why not just cut out tha last phase.

Seven-thirty-one an' I gotta go. Kill my coffee and fill it back up. I check my pockits frantically as tha mania sets in.

Phone? Yup.

Cigarettes? Got'm.

Lighter? Theah it is.

Phone? Oh yeah.

Wallet? Back pockit.

Cigarettes? Still have'm

Out tha front doah an' sit on tha front steps ta smoke a butt. My blood pressure an' heaht rate spike, again. Thought's staht ta race fasta than I can think.

Does anyone smell melting rubber?

Jump in tha front seat an' boost tha ignition.

Geah change, raverse.

Geah change, drive. It's show time, boys.

Amphetamine King

Mike Tise

Untitled

Kevin Menasco

I'm trying to forget the best the,
gone the, long the, road the, songs
the, one.

That I can't shake from the dust
when I start the rise to let chance try
to change,

All the things we've made inside of
one more day till I count another
time,

When we can back those coins we
tossed in the water and,

Prayed not to lose or falter,

But my shin's breaking altars kneel-
ing for a father that maybe I can't
see;

Since an eye for an eye makes the
world blindly believe,

In some Rx prescription,

Sam Summer addictions,

With a practical porn population,

Living on a desktop streaming to a
nation still living in isolation;

Trying to find something

So we can breath in the tree life

So we can see in the sunlight

So we can walk past our wakes
alive and leave those flasks on our
trains behind.

But I still remember you. The one
thing you got on me was every
single memory.

To you I may disappear into this
haze of missing eyes and Rx days,
watching my knees

break while your altar stays the
same.

But you must wake up and see: I
have taken no eyes. I am not the
blind. And you, are

not the free.

My friend, she wears her armor black,
a shield for the tear duct, pauldrons for every lash,
a slope of creamy metal from the pencil she never lacks;
so when the world decides to smash
head first into her gut, at least her eyes will be ready,
and not have to suffer the embarrassment of leaking.
For mascara is really war paint, applied with a steady
hand every morning, and when the world comes seeking
a girl, it finds Areto, lips clamped shut
and eyes dressed in black, ready for a fight.
But,
You have yet to see in stiller hours, when night
melts away armor: free from weight, eyes shine with mirth;
I look and see someone's mother, a future Demeter, a face born of earth.

The Warrior's Sonnet

Sara Clark

Wooden bridge, sunken path, hallowed trees
guides you to her ruins — burned.
The scent of smoke and lilacs, stale on the breeze...
There, under the arches many lovers had lain spurned.
The legend speaks of music, life within this castle throbbing.
Its Madame wrapped in both furs and men,
is now but a specter left charred and sobbing.
Locals that feared this place of booze and sex as ill-reputed den,
now come to meet the jazz music by stairway touch.
Ninety years have since left their mark,
a fire that ravaged has hidden all too much.
Only the forest holds her true story within its bark.

Careful though you may tread,
You will find whispers unheard and awaken the dead.

Madame Sherri's

Lyndsey Carpenter



Dorian Sanders

The Way It Is

Elyse Gilbert

I wake up and do what I do
first thing every morning: Math.

Yesterday = #222

$222 + 1 = 223$.

223 days.

223 days pregnant.

Well into the 8th month, I'm
far past the point of no return. Of
course, I'm resigned to that fact.
I'm never turning my back on this
baby.

Then I get up and do what I do
second thing every morning: throw
up.

My mother thinks I should hate
the baby's father, but I think she
hates him enough for the both of
us. I was angry before, sure, but
now I'm just resigned. I'm never
turning my back on my baby.

I stand up shakily, spit the
venom of morning sickness into
the sink, and brush my teeth hard.

The thing I was most afraid of
was going to school once I started
to show, and I have since slain that
beast, and come through mostly
unscathed. By now, the looks of
shock, disappointment, and fear
have morphed into looks of sym-
pathy and encouragement from
the strange shape-shifting crea-
tures that stalk the halls of my high
school. I barely notice the looks
anymore.

By barely notice, I mean I no-
tice only one. His eyes are green,
but sometimes, depending on the

weather or the color of his shirt,
they turn grayish blue and almost
match mine.

Every day at the end of third
period, I take a left out of my Al-
gebra II classroom, walk 11 steps
down the hall, and clumsily lumber
down the stairs with the ever-
growing convexity hanging over
my elastic waistband insert. At the
end of the stairs, I turn right, and
after about six steps, there he is
walking towards me.

I see the top of his head
first, with its unkempt sandy hair,
sometimes lying down shaggy and
sometimes spiked up like a hedge-
hog. He walks with some other
boys from the wrestling team.
They might make remarks about
me, they do that sometimes. I
don't really hear them because he
meets his eyes with mine. Every-
day, he meets his eyes with mine
at the end of third period six steps
to the right of the bottom of the
staircase. He stares at my face for
a few seconds, right into my eyes,
but as I get closer his eyes slide
down to the protuberance.

His friends smack him to get
his attention.

"Yo, Mike. Mikey. Yo! Did you
hear Chad? He got so totally
wasted and fell off...."

And then I'm past him. I re-
member that I called him Michael
when we were together, that one

time, because Mike is such a jock
name and he's so much more than
that. I won't see him again until the
next day.

It's okay, though. My baby
is mine. The boy is not mine. He
never was, he doesn't love me,
and I don't love him. There's no
point in trying to create a perfect
little family out of the raw materi-
als we've been given. He doesn't
want it, he regrets it, he's afraid.
I do, I don't, and I'm not. There's
the answer. I can handle that.

It's not easy being pregnant,
but I'm used to things not be-
ing easy. My mother helps me,
and we work on the baby's room
together when I get home from
school, arranging it all and getting
furniture ready and painting. She
gets frustrated trying to put a shelf
together, and curses the name of
my baby's father, and I laugh it off
because she can take the anger all
for herself. I'm not angry.

Usually I'm not angry. The hor-
mones and the mood swings that
come along with being pregnant,
that I have to handle on my own.
It's not impossible of course, but
it's probably the worst part of it.
Little things set me off sometimes.

I'll lie down in bed at night and
suddenly remember the way he
kissed my ear when he was lying
next to me. The party was so loud,
but the door was closed and it

was all muffled, and we were so
quiet. I could hear every breath he
took on that little bed.

Then, out of nowhere, I burst
into tears. Thinking about a stupid
little bed in a stupid little house,
someone's stupid party house. It's
dumb, it's the hormones making
me feel crazy. I'm taking Vitamin
D supplements to increase the
endorphins in my brain and make
me feel better, but little memories
like that still set me off. His hands
wrapped around my shoulders....I
curl up and shake with sobs un-
der the covers. It's so silly, these
exhausting fits of crying. I'm lucky
that they only come when I'm in
my room, alone with no one to see
me looking so stupid and pathetic.
I do things better on my own.

It's okay, I tell myself. I'm preg-
nant and hormonal. It's okay to
cry for now. In a month or so, I will
have my baby to take care of and I
won't be alone and I will be happy
and my hormones will be back to
normal and I will be stable. It will
all be gone in a month or so. It's okay
to curl up in my bed and heave
with sobs and soak my pillow
with salty tears, but only when I'm
alone in my room, and only until I
have my baby.

~~~~~  
~~~~~  
~~~~~

Several years later, a young

man is buying a cup of coffee from a barista at a stand in a park. He goes to the same girl at the same stand and gets the same thing every Friday afternoon at 3:34 after walking 8 blocks from the elementary school where he works as a teacher's aide. Medium, black, two sugars.

She smiles shyly at him. He gives her a polite little smile back, but walks away with his coffee and without a word. She is disappointed.

He follows the sidewalk south, in the direction of a bright, plastic outdoor playscape. Half-hidden behind a large maple tree, he pauses and looks at the children playing and laughing and being chased by their parents. His eyes fall on one little pale, dark-haired boy with grayish-green eyes sitting nervously at the top of a red slide. A woman with a black braid and a bright smile crouches at the bottom with her arms wide open, coaxing him down. After a few seconds, the little boy inches forward and finally zooms down into a big, smiling hug.

She shakes her braid across the other shoulder as she cuddles with her little boy, and as she moves her head, the man catches her clear blue eyes for a fraction of a second. It's only been four minutes, and it's already time to go.

His vision blurs as he walks away, fat tears welling up in his eyes as he counts his steps. Twenty-two, twenty-three, twenty-four steps away. His thoughts follow the same pattern they do every Friday at 3:38 in the afternoon. He's so big now. Thank God he looks like her, she's so beautiful and she loves him so much. She doesn't love me at all. She hates me. He probably hates me too. I wish I knew his name.

She looks away quickly, her heart pounding in a way that was unexpected, but painfully familiar. When she looks back up, the place beneath the tree is empty. She is disappointed. She isn't surprised.

A fist-sized lump forms in her gut and crawls up into her chest, but she swallows it back down quickly. She knows how upset Michael would get if Mommy started to cry.



**Dorian Sanders**

# Untitled

Daniel Shay

We hauled him down the stairs like an old sofa, his mud-puddle eyes worried, but foolishly trusting. As I touched his side, he whimpered because his arthritic joint creaked painfully, audibly under the pressure of my hand. After we lifted his hind legs into the car and shut the door, I thought I had severed us. Then my mother drove him to be lethally injected, or gassed, or some other criminal end, and I did not see him for half a year 'til he gave me the last morsel of his dumb love in a dream.

Good dog.

# Words

Roxan McKinnon

Say  
what you need to say  
and have faith  
that others  
will  
swim in the ocean of meaning  
and somehow reach  
your shore.

I woke up perplexed by the ways in which we commemorate the passage of time. Each day relentlessly marks another anniversary of your absence. I want to tell you that yesterday,

a child without a family asked me if I believed in God. I am pretending that he did not notice how I stumbled over my answer. I lied, and thought of how I promised you I never

would again. The wind is stronger than my will to get out of bed and I'm wondering why the sun talked to Frank instead of me. But mostly, I wonder when you'll call. Your t-shirt clings

to my body like an infant as I pull the door shut behind me. I don't have to tell you who's name I cursed when I received a \$100 fine for parking in front of a handicap ramp. I start

the car and picture you riding shotgun. Coming home, I imagine my eyes, and how they would react if I found you waiting at the bottom of my stairs, at my kitchen table, pouring

a glass of wine. I am skipping heartbeats and meals, while sliding down in between morals just to reach your ear, wondering if he ever found out who called the sun away from him, and if he

ever heard them calling him. May he be burned out of the sky if he calls you away too. You look up too often, passing over the light falling to rest right at your height.

Jeffrey said there are two kinds of women — those you write poems about, and those you don't. Every time I look at you, I see my life's manuscript flying in the wind with your hair.

In the morning, the white sheets you pull over your skin become pages of 'Don't Leave' and 'I Love You More Than', laced with hope that you'll say we should call this home someday.

# Call This Home

Christine Jozitis



# Writing with Pencils on Fire

Jeremy Gray

The scars never scared me.  
They, visible and palpable only  
when I scoured my maps for escape routes.  
Your youngest flesh raised and lining  
both arms, sing your songs of solitude  
so your mouth can mumble escapes  
from traps your eyes set for strangers.  
Uncharted, I drew our maps in pencil, and set a meteoric pace.

A fortnight.

I collapse,  
maps flaming — none complete —  
bright and heatless.  
My ankle is bleeding  
and, though vitriolic,  
your hands suppress the flow.

Human toxicity exists.  
Your unfading armor I still can't see  
and never will;  
my maps are still in pencil  
our path  
in pen.

## Lucy and Miguel: A Meeting of Immaculate Siblings

Michael A. Luna

Greetings to you, My Sister, (7)  
What a Blessed, Holy day! (7)  
What has brought you to the Planes? (7)  
And why sit so far away? (7)

**Why must we rhyme? (4)**

**Is it a crime— (4)**

**To speak out of tone (5)**

**When I'm sitting alone? (6)**

Sister! What is going on? (7)  
Why do you speak this way? (6)  
How can you say such a thing (7)  
On this Blessed, Holy day? (7)

**Need I a reason? (5)**

**You think it's *Treason*— (5)**

**That I would rebuke (5)**

**The Tyrannical *Duke*? (6)**

"Rebuke" you say? "Duke" as well? (7)  
Dear Sister, what's this *Word*? (6)  
You and I both know quite well, (7)  
Our Father's name is: The LORD! (7)

**Not anymore! (4)**

**Father's name, I abhor! (6)**

**I *rebuke* Father's name— (6)**

**And I *denounce* His fame! (6)**

Dear Lucy, you speak such spite! (7)  
Has the knowledge slipped your mind (7)  
Of His care in making you— (7)  
*Most Beautiful of Our Kind?* (7)

**Miguel, Miguel . . . (4)**

**You know me well— (4)**

**But now, you *don't*— (4)**

**And now, you *won't*! (4)**

**For I exalt myself— (6)**

**Like a traitorous *Elf* (6)**

**Above His Throne, (4)**

**So / alone (4)**

**Will assume rule, (4)**

**Not Him—a *fool*! (4)**

You *do* speak of Treason! (6)  
 Oh, My Dear Sister Lucy . . . (7)  
 Surely, you can still repent. (7)  
 But *please*, just *listen* to me! (7)  
 Don't abandon Our Father. (7)  
 You cannot return to Him. (7)  
 We were made for *His* glory— (7)  
 To follow *His* Law and Whim! (7)

**A Tyrant is He! (5)**  
**But, just look at *me*! (6)**  
**I am Beauty itself— (6)**  
**Like a traitorous Elf, (6)**  
**I will . . . make *War*, (4)**  
*Unlocking Hell's Door! (5)*  
**Now behold, *my* glory, (6)**  
**Accompanied by my *fury*! (8)**  
**Children of the Tyrant Duke, (7)**  
**Listen now, as I rebuke (7)**  
**The One Who Made Us and the World! (7)**  
**In a *sneer*, my lips are curled! (7)**  
**I cannot vanquish Him myself— (8)**  
*Join me now, the Traitorous Elf, (8)*  
**And I shall give you all *Freedom*! (8)**  
**Join me now, Comrades, in *my* Kingdom! (9)**

My Dear Sister, who has lost (7)  
 Father's gift of Grace and Love, (7)  
 Whose Beauty shone '*most* as grand (7)  
 As The Lamb and Holy Dove, (7)  
 I still love you, Dear Sister, (7)  
 But if you challenge the LORD, (7)  
 I will cast you *out* of Here, (7)  
 With my Holy Flaming Sword! (7)

**Come then, Brother, (4)**  
**I am like no other! (6)**  
**I, from Pride, Envy, Anger, and Sloth, (9)**  
**And Greed, Gluttony, and Lust, make *cloth*, (9)**  
**Weaving for myself a royal *dress*, (9)**  
**Formed out of Sins: a *beautiful* mess! (9)**  
**I will corrupt all that *He* has made, (9)**  
**Beginning with the Ones in the Glade— (9)**  
**The *Garden*, rather: "*Eden*" it's called. (9)**  
**Won't Our Father be *appalled* (7)**  
**When my serpent form, Eve's March impede, (9)**

**The Lie I tell, seducing Man's need (9)**  
**For more than Our Father chose to share? (9)**  
*Therein will I base my snare! (7)*  
**They will soon think like me: (6)**  
**The *First* Traitor—*Lucy*! (6)**  
**They will want to be like the Most High. (9)**  
**The *Fruit* pleasing to the Eye (7)**  
**Will seal the doom of Man (6)**  
**And *ruin* the Tyrant's perfect Plan! (9)**  
**The Lie will spread 'cross the world, (7)**  
*My perfect Plan will then be unfurled: (9)*  
**To exalt myself, though I may Fall— (9)**  
**To become the Ruler of all (8)**  
**The world, its kings and *all* of their lands, (9)**  
**And convince them that Our Father stands (9)**  
**Beyond the reach of their feeble mind, (9)**  
**That He and they are not in Kind (8)**  
**In the Spirit, which He gave to them! (9)**  
**"Breath" of Life? More like *phlegm*! (6)**  
**Corruptible creatures—that's all they are. (10)**  
**Teachable tools—*animals* on par! (9)**  
**I'll feed them False Gospels of *every* type (10)**  
**And when their blackened souls are ripe, (8)**  
**I will *pluck* them from their earthly forms, (9)**  
**Making their corpses food for the Worms, (9)**  
**While their Souls fuel my ongoing War (9)**  
**Against He Whom I Abhor— (7)**  
**Such a light Word to describe my state . . . (9)**  
**Simply put: The LORD, I *hate*! (7)**  
**While I am *Here*, I cannot begin (9)**  
**To share this idea of Sin (7)**  
**With any but my Brethren Divine. (9)**  
**So, hear you now this request of mine: (9)**  
*Cast me, Brother Miguel . . . (6)*  
**Cast me—down into *Hell*! (6)**  
**But know this, as I exalt: (6)**  
**God gave us free will, so this is *His* fault! (10)**

Yet another Lie, Lucy! (7)  
 Of free will—now hear *my* voice: (7)  
 Father didn't want robots, (7)  
 He wanted love by *choice*! (6)  
 Should you choose *another* path . . . (7)  
 Then you choose to face His *Wrath*! (7)

# Ant, Mother, Iron Fish - the Unbroken Code

Cheryl Lawton

On the day of the assault, First Private Tom Bradley, of E Company, 5th Marine Division, hid behind a coconut log on a trail lined by cliffs and caves. He was part of the second wave of Marines who had landed on the beaches of Iwo Jima without resistance. Unbeknownst to them, twenty-two thousand Japanese soldiers were waiting for them in the honey-combed hills of the interior, all of them under orders to kill as many Americans as possible before they died. Bullets peppered the sand around Bradley's feet. Razor-sharp grass, six feet high, slashed through his uniform and skin, pinning the green recruit and what was left of his company in place. He was reloading his rifle when a man with Asian eyes emerged from the jungle. The warrior was dressed in American fatigues and his face was painted with streaks of mud.

Bradley hoisted the gun to his shoulder. "Oh shit." On the USS Bismarck Sea, his bunkmates had warned of suicide attacks by Japs who camouflaged themselves in Allied uniforms. His sights took in the man's black hair and dark skin. "Stop," he pleaded.

The enemy froze in place.

Bradley screamed, "Stay where you are. I'll shoot. I will."

Gunfire rained down from the caves, forcing the foreign combatant to squat and crawl toward Bradley's position.

The young man closed his eyes. He thought of his mother and then, his girlfriend, Diane. They had only had sex once, the night before he shipped out. Staring down at her cornflower eyes, Bradley prepared to squeeze the trigger.

The warrior pounced first, knocking the inexperienced soldier against the log and jamming the barrel of the exploding gun to the ground. "Shut up, Private. Didn't your sergeant brief you? I'm Navaho, a Diné." His voice sounded like home. Pulling a radio from his heavy knapsack, he handed Bradley a generator. "If you want to get out of here, start cranking." Then he connected a broken antenna with a pair of wire cutters, and spoke into the transmitter urgently, his voice rising and falling in waves of what sounded like gibberish.

"You're not one of them?"

Bradley asked, letting go of his bladder.

"No, buddy. Air Command is on the way. We're taking the mountain."

Noon flames  
burn my face  
and traces of feet fossilize  
the sand  
in moments  
until the salted breeze  
kicks  
the grain  
into another place.

I pass by prepared sandwiches  
and fulfilled families.

The ocean frisks me with  
naughty  
waving hands  
and I continue to glide away from the sun.

## The Atlantic Lasso

Pamela Lowe

To a fragile 6-year-old, it seems like their bones are made of stone, cased in strong shells of hard muscle, one flick of a tail like a whip—but they always liked me, and they knew I liked them, too.

On a good day—the best kind of day, really,  
I could climb on top of Joy's back, watching her sturdy, rocking shoulders, her mane twisted in the grip of my small fingers, as we climbed the dirt trail leading up to pasture. My mom, walking beside us, would remind me to hold on, but I was never worried. Be cautious, but not afraid.

1996

Kate Szumita





Dorian Sanders



# Futile Systems

Levon Schpeiser

the feudal system was a futile system

but socialism can turn servile victims into worthwhile victors

the encomienda is a serious aspect of the imperialist agenda

but i bring the heat to hip hop heads and in reality i'm quick to bend ya

i got a thing for grass but it grows better when you put a little mulch in it

like cesar chavez i'm a cooperative agriculturalist

or che guevara bringing about a new era

from the northern area to all of the americas

but when i'm swearing yo i'm scaring you

efficiency is part of my arsenal and i already been done all the things you came to do

slowly but surely the path to peace is changing you

fight for people's liberty like jose marti

not worried about religious strife

between followers of christ and allah

here to bring the masses closer a la simon bolivar

don't believe in religion in general but i'm a god on every mic i step to

with the foresight to end more fights with nonviolence than 20 teks with silencers

it's a small world we living in and i'm trying to bridge gaps and combine the differences dividing all the caribbean islanders

imperial powers trying to devour the people hour by hour

like wine without the united farm workers the grapes are getting sour

but i'm like a prophet trying to put a stop to people getting shot for profit

we got government officials burning down the biblioteca

but if you complain you might disappear in the basement of the politecnica

i'm here to represent and set a

precedent because if you're a person people should respect ya

for hundreds of years it's been evident that indigenous people are irrelevant

at least until bolivia elected evo morales as president

whether we're from latin america or the us we can't allow cowards to corral us

nobody should have to worry about having no power or not being able to take showers

the countryside is full of the bodies of children who've died while mothers cried

he may be a communist but my problem is i don't know what cuba will do when castro dies

the brazilians have silva but the forests are getting chopped off and tribal leaders are getting knocked off with sawed offs

paramilitary organizations stay scaring juvenile delinquents and firebombing and paralyzing parallel political institutions

military ruthlessness is a perfect way of convincing the people of their own uselessness

but really i'm more worried about how they'll find new ways to use us next

growth without development leaves babies dead in the womb but for most people it's the elephant in the room new markets the capitalists eyed while the politicians lied but the people have needs and some turn to coca leaves and ponchos they just dyed

the only way to fight against these giants is with our mind's defiance

in colombia they got no choice but to grow cocaine its the only way to keep their life sustained

in mexico no more jobs at the maquiladora so the poor gotta steal or jump the US border

fair trade now thats not a request its an order there's a long list of worse methods we could resort to

the third world has alot of poverty but they usually have alot of resorts too

why don't the cubans own Guantanamo and why don't the panamanians own the panama canal zone

why don't we fight to expand the  
rights of costa rican chicas

but it's hard to fight cultural  
stereotypes when the taco bell  
dog won't stop barking about  
gorditas

i've always admired guerillas in  
military fatigues but even i get  
fatigued when i see revolutionary  
zeal turned into greed

but i'm here to spread the seeds  
of independence and when it  
comes to oppression i feel a need  
to end it

i can't say i'm underprivileged and  
broke when i'm rockin a peacoat  
but peace is something i want to  
promote and i have to emoté

i'm not always the type to play  
games but when it comes to  
who's causing pain i will name  
names

and we can't stand for racism  
anymore or governments treating  
people as slaves

basically my point is why can't we  
all get along?

even if sometimes we don't get it  
except through a song

but some dudes got guns drawn  
and won't stop until red dawn

in reality legal impartiality is a fallacy  
it's kind of a bad way to seek  
balance b

part of the problem is we're a part  
of the problem and can't pick a  
side in politics like smeagol and  
gollum

i think it's a bad idea to pick  
leaders who say we'll grow and  
their promises are hollow

but let's not get it twisted i'm not  
trying to go ballistic

i just think it's a problem when  
people use ethnic criteria to  
gerrymander a district

alot of people think i fit the criteria  
of a misfit

it's cool though i'm not in it to  
make bread i'm fine with some  
water and a biscuit

like two billion other people in the  
world who haven't had a chance  
yet

there's a new generation in latin  
american politics and it's a positive  
trend if you've been following it

i'm kind of on the fence about  
hugo chavez but i'm mostly  
interested in who provides social  
services best

that doesn't mean we can't  
support anyone who doesn't have  
an s on their chest

like superman but some people  
have big plans and people are  
celebrating in the street with big  
bands

I can't think of a good way to end  
this song though so i'll say what i  
always say viva la revolucion!



**Olga Godes**  
**Between the Bars**



## A Day and a Night, Pt. II

Kelly Tehan Jankauskas

Anything's possible, Johnny,  
 If you're man enough to stare  
 Into the brown slide of  
 Your own lunch and bile  
 As it avoids the pebbles on Route 2.  
 It's then that you reach your best:  
 For the feeling that maybe this is it:  
 Not understanding the weep and the want,  
 Or the pock marks left by rubber dirt.  
 Thank Lord for being outside  
 So you don't leave a stain on the rug  
 Or cheek so many lost hairs  
 On the shit-speckled lip of the toilet.  
 It's better to forget the bad times,;  
 Even helps you to forget the good.  
 But oh, they're good.  
 Some of the best times I can't even remember.  
 But that's just going for saying

Wandering around like a boy with his head cut off  
 as you travel through the good times.  
 (go, start, stop.)  
 We go puddle jumping into a pile of muddy bricks,  
 Shit thrown shown through the clear glass window.  
 Facing outward at my reflection in the sky  
 Fireworks flicker as people go to sleep,  
 Cherries blossom into thin, dark air.  
 I can feel it.

Your hair was too long, so they trimmed it.  
 Then they decided to cut it off completely.

Then your fingers got in the way,  
 So they cut off your arms.  
 They cut off your head next, so you  
 wouldn't have to see what  
 they've done to you.

Your stomach caved in and your spine cracked.

Then your breasts fell off, since  
 they tore out your shoulders and  
 in the end had to push down  
 everything from the waist up.

They left your thighs outside overnight and  
 on the last day they cut off your legs.

Only your feet are left, still, standing  
 on the front lawn of your house.  
 Now when I see you there, I wonder if  
 you wished they had the decency  
 to dig out your roots so you wouldn't  
 have to live with this.

## You, or Something Like It

Olga Godes

# Wonderland or Bust

Lyndsey Carpenter

Alice should have stayed  
(long lost, life lost)  
underground in a land of  
mocking invisibility and painted  
falsities. She would have been better  
acquainted with normalcy.

Eyes better adjusted  
to seeking Mad Hatters  
than finding mad masters  
striking and carving crimson  
into their dark skinned things.  
She would see no object,  
but real muscle spasms and tears.

She would age in shock, dreaming  
back to a black and red card army.  
Seeing the nightmare alive of  
shiny badges held by ones working  
for the devils of coke and whores,  
against the mothers and hard working men,  
in a monster city with an untamed lust.

She might find a drunken rodent in her tea  
unsanitary, but given the choice  
tea or the kool aid,  
she'll drink down every last rouge whisker.  
There is nothing left in this earthly circus  
for a child of bread and butterflies  
and golden afternoons.

Poor Borgia sister,  
You'll be married off for your father  
and brother's own gains  
three times—the first one  
will be annulled. You're pregnant  
at thirteen and your life  
is destined by murderous gluttons.  
The first crime family.  
They have God whispering in their  
Pope ears, but Lucifer too can  
dress in white.  
What would Perotto say?  
He is your father's messenger.  
Would the secret Roman Infante  
recognize Perotto? They have the  
same eyes. Borgia sister,  
Lucrezia—  
would you offer thirsty Perotto  
a cup of wine, tainted with  
our loving cantarella?  
Arsenic compound and extracted  
pig entrails—  
Poor Borgia sister,  
you don't need to know  
the details, it is tasteless, I promise.  
You just need to pour the wine.  
Invite the Medicis over for dinner  
while you are at it—  
perhaps they too could enjoy the  
liquor of succession.

## Lucrezia

Marcella Muscatell

One year ago today was the day I stopped crying  
Two years before that I met this guy named Chris  
Three beauty marks on his face  
Four dates later we had our first kiss  
Five times a day I would check my phone to see if he texted me  
Six weeks passed before we had our first argument

Six roses he gave me when he said sorry  
One smile was all it took for me to forgive him  
Five times he repeated, “I’ll never call you a bitch again.”  
Four times I skipped school to see him. The  
third time was when we got into yet another argument

Three minutes into the argument he called me a dumb bitch  
Six days was how long it took me to admit I had already forgiven him  
Four dozen roses were sent to my house that week  
One of my best friends asked me why I was so sad  
Two dimples sunk into my cheeks as I smiled and told her, “Nothing.”  
Five days after that Chris took me on a road trip

Five states we drove through blasting Elton John’s Bennie and the Jets  
Three times he wanted to change the CD, but I pouted, so he gave up  
Twice he jokingly called me a bitch  
Six piece nuggets and vanilla milkshakes cured our hunger  
At one point we were driving so fast we almost crashed  
Four hours into the trip, he introduced me to methamphetamine

Four days after that trip he punched me in the face  
Five bruises on my legs  
One sprained wrist  
Three hours in the emergency room that night  
Six dollars for the matinee movie we watched the next day  
Two hours later we were in the car blasting Elton John

Two of my friends told me to break up with him  
Four more seasons fly by full of arguments and black eyes  
Six times in a row he would call me if I didn’t answer my phone  
Five stitches in my head that I covered up with thick curls  
Three times I told him I hated him  
Once he told me he would stop beating me if I could just be the person he needed me to be

Two years after meeting him I was sitting at his funeral  
Fifteen minutes before his death, he had threatened to kill me if I didn’t come to his house  
Four p.m., I got to his house and found him hanging from the ceiling  
Three other girls walked by me crying as they put roses down in his casket  
Six times during the service, I almost missed him  
One year ago today was the day I stopped crying

# The Day I Stopped Crying

Dametres Hutchinson

# I Expected to Free You

Anabel Balsebre

Richard said I could  
release you,  
he said  
Rip seeds  
from the beaks  
of the two  
Taxidermied Emberizidae  
perched on the windowsill  
Independent Canyon Cocked  
to the door  
Desperate Abert,  
to him  
Droned expectation after dark  
Nestling in my dried blood, close  
pleading monogamy to you, dead  
Richard said  
Familiarity’s extinct, but Eric isn’t.  
He floats over farm fields in Baja  
You incubate depressions in Sinaloa  
Singing the same song,  
Singing the same song  
In pairs  
Or alone.



# The Architecture of Friendship

Heather Mangone

Define forever.  
Continuous, ever-lasting?  
Like the black ink injected  
Into the cold bare flesh of  
My right foot.  
Permanent.  
Unlike the friendship we built  
Out of crumbling bricks,  
Masonry of blind men who build  
Stone walls of broken, empty promises.

The distance was torturous.  
Unable to deny how eagerly you  
Relied on me as your solid foundation.  
I began to disintegrate,  
No longer holding you up, or guiding your frame.  
Repair was not an option,  
The cracks were only worsening.  
Sharp debris slicing through my stomach  
As this happy home collapsed.

No goodbye, no explanation,  
You picked up your pieces with ease,  
Wood splinters, a mess of glass from broken windows,  
And with little effort you discovered a stronger foundation.  
She held you taller than I ever could  
And molded you into picture perfection.  
While I remained as concrete dust,  
Abandoned.

Why,  
for years limping on  
without aim or healing  
a shadow flickering in the adamant creep  
from one haze  
to the next  
of consciousness's dawn  
nothing more than headstones  
and breath,  
did hope survive?

My heart is too restless  
to allow me the luxury of sleeping.

I clean, I paint, I bake  
I do not drink (too much)  
I write, I dance, I sing  
so I do not have to think (too much)

I am  
too breathless  
to allow myself the luxury  
of sleeping.

# Sitting in the Grass with You I Wonder

Katie O'Donnell

# Sleepless in Allston

Meaghan Lis



Interpretation of Dreams  
Nadia Jennings

# Fading Roots

Daniel Shay

My great grandparents  
were O'Sheas and O'Briens  
and through their lineage,  
I have inherited their traits:  
my body is built to build,  
to herd sheep,  
to fall on its knees,  
to consume pints of Guinness,  
and to be washed with  
Irish Spring soap.

My father and his father  
and all their fathers since Saint Patrick  
were the same way:  
taught to fear god and woman,  
to work hard,  
to love without the word,  
and I am a product of that.  
Cloudy days of melancholy  
are my home,  
bread and potatoes my fuel,  
literature my shelter,  
sarcasm my given tongue,  
but green  
is not my favorite color,  
I fear not god but those who do,  
I read more Bukowski than Yeats,  
and I do not wash away my dirt and grime  
with Irish Spring soap.  
It all is fading:  
from druids to Jesus,  
shaken by faith to shaking it,  
fields to libraries,  
Guinness to Pabst Blue Ribbon.  
It fades like lush green hills  
rolling into the morning mist.

The malocchio is utilized  
when you hate the bride and her white dress,  
when her hour glass figure disgusts  
you, when her happiness is over-  
-kill.

I saw my aunt shoot it across her  
husband's shoulder while dancing the waltz,  
wondering why our cousin should woo  
the good doctor and win his war chest.

I have proof of this; the camera eye  
shuttered, as it hit the bride above  
the scoop of her dress, ricocheted down  
her bony spine and spun into the  
lens.

At the reception table my aunt  
gave her gifts and wished the couple well  
as she measured her green dress against  
crisp, new white and forgot to say God  
-bless you.

# Italian Curse

Sara Clark



# I'll Be There

Emily Mangiaratti

I can see the way they look at us, like we've just landed from Mars. We've been here for nearly two years—why are they not used to us? Me and my partner, Daley, are standing out in the hot mid-day sun. We look out over the vast sandy dunes, saying nothing at all to each other. Our humvee is parked on the edge of a pretty big dune. Daley sits on the edge of the dune and takes a long drag from his cigarette. He stares out into the vast desert. He watches the people of Iran in a nearby village walk back and forth through the winding streets. There is an outdoor market in one of the dirt roads and people from all over are coming to buy their groceries for the day. I watch Daley looking at all the people for a little bit, and then look back over at the village. There is a little boy in one of the streets now. He has a bat in one hand and something in the other. I am too far away to see what it is, but I would bet it's a baseball. He seems to be calling to some of his friends. Before I know it, there are at least 10 kids out on the street. They set up a makeshift baseball diamond and begin to play. It's unbelievable how the American culture spreads. One of the medics who visited the village probably taught it to them. I put my gun down on the ground and sit down next to Daley. He

pulls a pack of cigarettes out of his uniform pocket and offers me one. Usually I wouldn't, but this week has been so stressful a cigarette is just what I need. "Thanks," I say and pull one out of the pack. He lights my cigarette and I take a drag, letting the smoke run out of my nose with a big sigh. Daley and I have been partners in crime for nearly three years now. We met at training camp and were practically inseparable. He looks over at me and asks, "You ever feel like you're wasting your life sometimes?"

"I don't know," I reply.

"C'mon, you're almost out of your 20s, we've been here for almost two years, and I can see the grey hairs on your head." He takes off my beret and begins swatting at my head.

"Cut it out," I laugh. "I do not have any grey hair yet."

"You talk to your little bros yet?" he asks.

"Nah." I take another drag from my cigarette and let the smoke run out of my mouth. "The system's been down for some time and I haven't had any time to write."

We sit there in silence for a little bit, me thinking about my family, Daley just studying the village thinking about whatever Daley thinks about. I close my eyes and lean back on my backpack. My youngest brother, Aiden, will be

graduating in a couple months. I really want to get back to see the graduation. Both my brothers will be there, and I feel, as the oldest, I should be there too. But my dad had other ideas for the oldest boy. I remember the day he picked me up from football practice. The leaves were turning their beautiful shades of red, orange, and golden yellow. An army man himself, it was imperative that I carry on the tradition. It was only a matter of time until I was asked to fall into the line of duty. Around here, "the talk" was no sex talk. Instead the talk was more like a draft letter. My father had spent a couple years in the service and my grandfather had fought in WWII, so the army was a family affair. I looked him dead in the face the whole way home, nodding when I felt it was appropriate. As we pulled up to our house, I could almost smell the delicious dinner Mom was cooking me. Both Aidan and Reid were home from school already, and were anxiously waiting for me to arrive.

I open my eyes, and look around. Daley is standing now, smoking another cigarette. I look up at him. "Jeeze kid, how many cigs is that today?"

He looks over at me and, just to tick me off, takes another long drag from his cigarette. Then he

looks into the sun and answers, "Five."

I stand up and take a drink from my canteen. "Damn kid, those things will kill you yet."

"If this war don't kill me first." He takes the cigarette out of his mouth and flicks it on the ground. He walks over to me and pats my head, then looks out over the horizon. "C'mon kid, we best be getting back to camp. You know how Sarge gets we show up late for roll call."

But neither of us move; we don't want to. Instead we watch the kids of the village being called in for dinner one by one. Slowly the kids begin to desert the street. Without saying anything to each other we take one last look at the empty village and climb back into the humvee. As Daley drives away, I take one more look at the tracks we are leaving behind, and the village in the valley. I turn back around and pull a picture out of my pocket. There, staring back at me is my whole family. I look into the eyes of my brother Aidan and promise that I will be home to see him graduate.

## Poem

**Tyler Burdwood**

*For Salo*

The wind took the hammer through the snow.  
 “The future’s off kilter but I still have somewhere to go,”  
 Thought the hammer, in the sky.  
 The storm let it go, made a lightning bolt crack in the ice.

I thanked the blizzard which changed my plans,  
 Lay still as a nail in a wiggling hand.  
 Cold winter fever, gray and bleak,  
 Should keep me frozen for more than the most of the week.

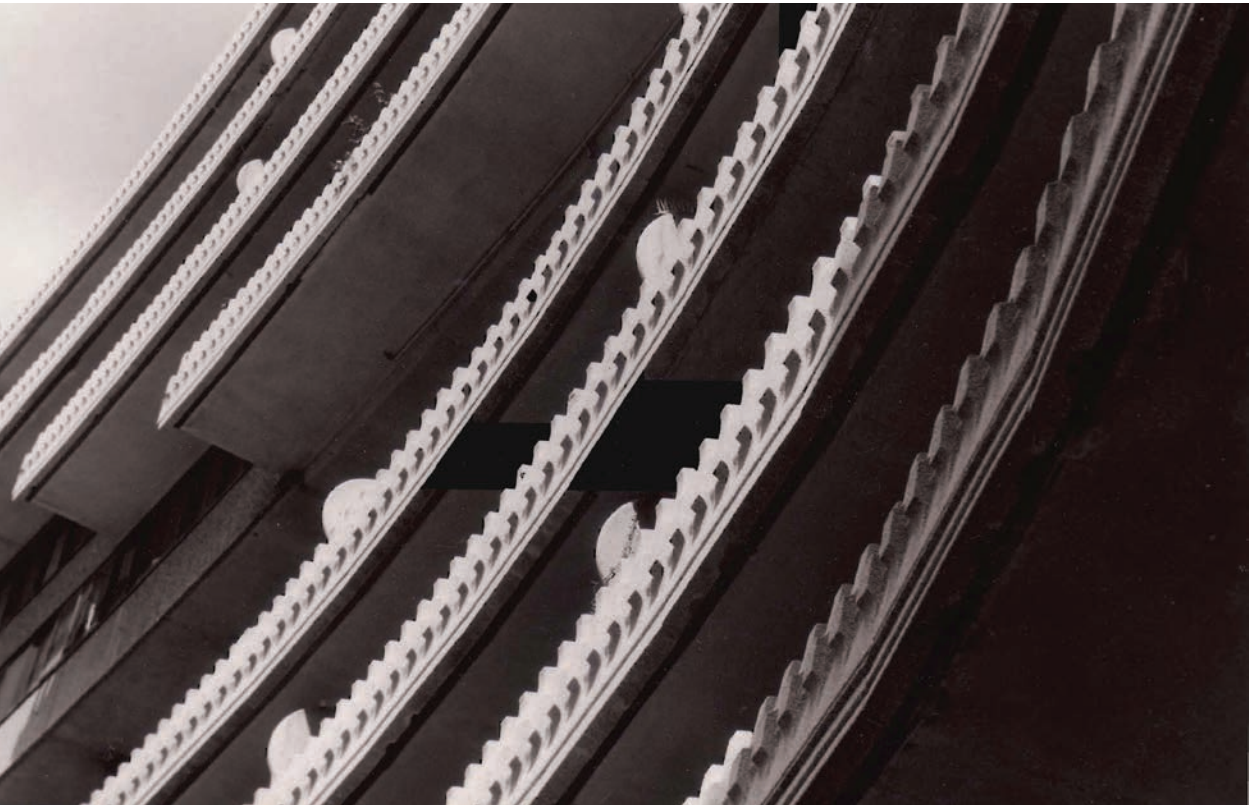
I was in love with a picture of you  
 That I painted daily with out meaning to.  
 Alone in my efforts, while all the time  
 You contradicted my hopeful design.  
 All of my dreaming takes its toll — what if —  
 There’s too many people and not enough souls?  
 We’re born with a burden we’ve all described:  
 We’re breaking our bodies and renting our minds  
 And I can’t help wondering if anything’s really my fault.

Gigantic

A single tip could swallow the Earth below her whole  
 Forever impaling her womanly form into sharp jagged pieces  
 She only wishes to wear a mother’s apron, a hand to hold  
 Staring out at the cold tiled rows she wondered,  
 What does the Earth hold beyond her capturing?  
 Is it only little jagged pieces?  
 The onlookers wore pastel scarves tying on their heads  
 Their lips were crimson red hiding their deep set eyes  
 Her body hovered over them like a shrine  
 Some prayed at her golden feet and touched her draping robe  
 She scorned the name of the man with the chisel and hammer  
 There was never compassion from the grasps of the tiled floors.

## Statue

**Kristen Ritchie**



Untitled / Anonymous

The world has become changed,  
we no longer are them.  
Ne'er are we solemn,  
lest solemnity's in.  
The rote definition,  
of life, and life spent:  
loving, betraying,  
or contorting; chagrinned.

And so, we medicate; desecrate,  
will to propagate lost lies.  
Our minds' endless seeing of soft,  
tumultuous cries.  
Forceful endeavors, in stone  
and steel boxes,  
forgetting the meaning, of a field,  
littered with oxen.  
The unwillful directed  
by myriad chemistry;  
seeking being lost,  
or false, heartfelt camaraderie.  
But always accepting the ancient  
avenue or destiny.

Lost little children of all shapes,  
sizes, and colors.  
Blindly grasping for meaning,  
without the guide of a mother.  
An eon forgotten past,  
assumed to be known,  
like presumptuous logic  
could place definition to soul.

Impermanent actions, guided by  
impersonal factions.  
The merit of blood,  
is red hypnotic, didactic?  
For if it be genetic, a percent  
makes us siblings, distracted.  
Passive aggression, pushing  
crowds just for sake.  
Monetary divulsory,  
progresses. 'Til when?  
For comfort, for power?  
A juvenile strivation.

Unbound by the laws  
lain before history,  
mysteries of life become  
infantile compulsory.  
Just to awaken, from dream  
to a haze,  
this cold world may survive,  
least 'til next day.  
But to be ruled by the bars,  
set in one's mind,  
numbing experience,  
held by the crux of machined delirium,  
the fear within all,  
will burst out the seams,  
like a century old doll.

## A New Age

James Nutter



# Hands Clean

Meaghan Lis

Today is your girlfriend's twenty-first birthday.

Sometimes I wonder if my life is really just one long film.  
I play the nameless blonde you take to Brooklyn one lush, wanton afternoon in July.  
My hands are those of an artist's  
and I have pleasing plush lips.  
Some men regard it as one of my best features.

You always saw me as a Marilyn.  
I thought of myself as more of a Jackie.

"I'm never going to leave her," you say  
I laugh and remind you it is only our third date.  
My laugh sounds like two stones rubbing together.

This is the season of isotopic dreaming.  
The skies are shades of charcoal  
and all the birds are flying south.  
It's been eight months.  
My body heaves with longing.

I try to read your face,  
but it reveals nothing of your cravings  
your desires.  
Thin lips, cedar hair  
pale skin.  
You have the face of a man who's never felt real pain.

I am drunk on the night of your girlfriend's twenty-first birthday.  
I won't see you for weeks,  
maybe a month or so.  
My wrath could set this city on fire.

I dream of a sleepy Sunday morning.  
You crawl into bed, the potent scent of cigars and scotch.  
In my dream, I ask you questions that never struck me in waking life.  
You slide your hand between my legs, ever so gently  
smooth as stone.

In the streets, the fire rages on.

# Alice Grew Up

Kate Szumita

There's a fork in the road, one sign reading:  
Wonderland, this way.  
This time, there's no rabbit hole,  
and Alice is pushing 40, a heavy smoker  
living in a trailer park with  
a husband who likes to visit the tracks too often, but  
she still has that pretty blonde hair, the same hair  
on the same head that the Queen of Hearts  
had wanted so badly to chop off.  
Sometimes, Alice thinks  
she should have let her.



Corinne Dasti



Leah Cirker-Stark

Six days after his son's death and three after the funeral, Jonas Carlyle orders 782 pounds of zinc powder costing just over a thousand dollars, and begins his search for the same amount of ammonium nitrate. He clicks through page after page on library computers, too scared to go home and confront the silence, his only company a new cordless home telephone in a plastic bag at his feet. After discovering he can only buy the second ingredient in 500 kilogram shipments at a price that he doesn't bother looking at, he shrugs and orders another 320 pounds of zinc powder to keep the measurements even. Two days pass as Jonas mixes the components in his garage and sets them in place.

Jonas' phone is blissfully ignored in his right front pocket as he walks the aisles of a hardware store. Its vibrating is incessant. Fingering the folded lined piece of paper in his left front pocket, he pauses at the counter, looking at the hammer and chisel. After bringing up a single extended index finger and making eye contact with the cashier, he walks away and comes back with another chisel. He pays with a credit card and walks out.

Finally confronting the house—

but not acknowledging the silence — Jonas walks with speed and intent, gathering what he needs through the depressingly familiar arrangement of furniture. Refusing clearance to the sentimentality that challenges him with every inch he walks, fiber of carpet his feet touch, and every smell that reminds him this used to be his home, Jonas' isolated stoicism eventually fails him. He doesn't wipe the tears from his face.

Only the oldest and dingiest clothes will suffice. His old Army jacket, stripped of its CARLYLE tag. Originally tan, now brown work boots. Tattered painters pants over favorite jeans and a few layers of Christmas sweaters, cut down the center to prevent overheating, all consolidate onto his frame to paint a believable portrait of homelessness. Stashing the chisels in the side pockets of his jacket and tucking the hammer between his pants and lower back, Jonas walks out of his bedroom only to come back in a few seconds later, grabbing his guitar case.

Jonas slides his guitar into the backseat and flops behind the wheel, arms, body and face momentarily statuesque in absolute grief and determination. Before starting the engine, he

## Maxima Debetur Puero Reverentia

Jeremy Gray

*We Owe the Greatest Respect to a Child*

takes the folded paper from his pocket and puts it to the left of the speedometer so he can see it through the whole drive. Turning the key, he realizes he doesn't want it that far away and puts it in the inside breast pocket of his jacket, where it sits heavier than the hammer and chisels. The drive in is slow and the traffic runs like molasses. Sitting with both hands resting on the bottom of the wheel, waiting for those ahead to move, Jonas' mind refuses to be kind. It forces him to remember tender moments of care and anger and pride and when the line of mechanical coughers driven by mechanical thinkers finally moves, his face is wet and his hands are fists on the wheel.

He isn't sure of how long he'd been driving, but Jonas realizes he's in the city. He parks the car five blocks east of the destination, in an alleyway along Lexington Avenue where it'll stay until stolen or the buildings around it crumble. The brick face of a building is chipped where Jonas slams the door open and maneuvers out. The bubbling in his stomach tells him he needs something in it if he wants to keep going. He is always hungry now.

A café comes up on his left, Oren's Daily Roast, and he enters, asking for a cup of hot water — no he doesn't need a lid, no he doesn't need the protective sleeve, no he doesn't care about the bewildered look of employees at his state or the shuffling steps customers take to put subtle distance between them and him. He starts toward the door but stops and puts the cup to his lips. It isn't heat that spreads down his throat and sits in his stomach: it is magma that is forging islands of determination.

The center of four top lips curl up in fearful disdain as the eyes that rest above the sneering mouths observe a wiry, unkempt, unshaven, unwashed

something pour scalding water down his throat.

He doesn't drink it, just lets it fall. Pain is simply there, easily ignored, resting on the surface like a latex glove.

Out the door, three blocks to go, guitar strap beginning to dig in his shoulder and remind him it's there. Hollow grief burns in his chest, mocking the heat from the water. Jonas' pace slackens for a moment as he realizes the heat and the pain are the first things he's felt since watching his son be buried. He wants another cup, but his legs won't stop, the machine of his body operating its own gears and joints. Gravity isn't weighing him down anymore, only the rusty steel of old, decaffeinated emotions and the placid faces of everyone at the funeral. The waxen faces and lowered eyes render the hollow grief into a feverish stabbing pain. The city around him is gone and Jonas sees only the foundational crack that ran through his (ex)wife's face as she stood opposite of him. They caught each other's eyes as a supposed man of God spoke clichéd words of returning and ascending and amending, and that look between them set in place like gears flowing into each other. Over their dead son's body they had their last moment together. The gears kept turning and both of them offered their sacrifices of water to the soil in which their seed was resting. Looking down at what was left of their own recreated flesh and blood, boxed and ready to be buried, they were pulled apart from each other by the undeniable progress of time. Jonas already knew he wouldn't (couldn't) let anyone forget this moment, this grief, this child — his child.

Rising from his revelry, Jonas realizes he's stopped at the corner and is staring at the stone. Staring. This is it. He sits and opens his guitar case

and begins hitting any chords that feel relatively familiar, unintentionally searching for his past love of music. West 42nd street and 7th Avenue meet at a corner, Times Square, and here Jonas sits, rolling lifeless fingers over vibrating strings as herds of people move about, each with some semblance of a destination. They walk with long strides and open but unreceptive eyes. Jonas stops making noise and decides to get to work.

Grabbing one of the chisels and reaching behind him for the hammer, Jonas for a moment appreciates the tools, their weight and their potential. He is about to start when he realizes he's made a stupid mistake: he'd sat too much in the middle of the stone and couldn't begin from there. For a moment, Jonas sits thinking of a way to not be noticed shifting, then realizes how lost his actions are in the sea of people. He tosses his tools to his right, slides himself over, and drags his guitar and case with him.

He squeezes the hammer and the city disappears again. He is back in the delivery room: he has his (ex) wife's hand in both of his and they are screaming in tandem, excited to near hysteria, exuberant in blinding pain and celebrating the first seconds of their complete union. With the first infantile wails, Jonas' second half stops screaming and her vivacious spasms cease as she transcribes that energy into her newborn son, who takes the helm of noise-making. Jonas falls into a revelry of selflessness that he didn't know existed before this moment, a complete abandonment of his own ego possible only through dedication fueled by love. He tries to squeeze her hand and look at the first time mother, but instead Jonas is squeezing his tools and is staring into a listless mass of moving bodies.

With his back to the dead stone and the living sea in front of him, Jonas strikes the first vertical line, a diagonal one half the length of the vertical, then a connecting mirror image of the first two lines. It is an eternal tattoo that everyone will read, that everyone will remember. The spine of following letters are hammered out by the clay-faced artisan, the defeated ex-father, the ignored and the ignoring operating amidst each other, one fighting through transient faces and the other unable to forget one. Maxima is completed, and Jonas rewards himself with vibrations from his guitar. His fingers fall over the strings and his mind ventures inward through the labyrinth of memory, doors seared shut with tears and hallways decorated with easy smiles and lazy Sunday afternoons.

It was Spring, Almost-Summer, when the delicately warm days that tease you with cool breezes on your forearms and sunny hugs from behind, and temperatures shifting and mixing and changing like tea steeping in a pot, leaving no one smileless. The three of them were in the backyard, Cynthia had made a lengthy, affectionate goodbye to run inside and check her email and would only be gone a few minutes. The sound of the door sliding shut was met with the boy asking, in his beautiful youth, what was in the brown bottle Jonas was holding, christened with the slightest glaze of condensation. Jonas let him hold the bottle and smiled at the surprise that walked across his soft cheeks at the weight, and the grimace that marched through his eyes after he brought the bottle from his lips and handed it back, shaking his head violently. Cynthia walked back out, smiling, her hands anxious to get back around Jonas, who stifled a small laugh when he heard his boy burp.



Debetur is done. Jonas can't remember when his hands stopped playing and started carving again, but things like these aren't questioned anymore. Things just happen. Sometimes you know why, other times you can only raise your chin and eyes to the sky and ponder at the infinity. P, u, and e were just finished when one of the anonymous few who've unplugged from our game of money and cosmetic happiness steps out of the sea and notices Jonas.

"This ain't yo fuckin cowna," he says. "G't tha fuck out." The skin on his face is sun burnt and plagued with a perpetual look of slight confusion and derision. His eyes aren't afraid to look and his mouth delights in describing what most don't want to hear. It is his corner. Jonas pauses and lets the hammer and chisel fall to the ground. The Owner's head tilts to the side and he asks "Choo gat there?" A pause. The Owner of the corner knows Jonas won't respond, his mouth is as silent as his eyes. The Owner sees the guitar case, the crumbled bills and mingling change and takes the affront of Jonas taking his panhandling spot in stride, seizing an opportunity.

"Got a b'niss propsition f'ya. Ain't nobody really gon pay you much 'tension if you just sittin down n strummin them strings — you need a frontman, sumbody who can git that 'tension and git mo silver n green in that case." Jonas pauses for a second, understanding exactly what this ignored stranger is saying, and picks up the chisel and hammer and finishes the r and the o of puero. "Seasy. We jus split it, all, fitty-fitty. Deal? Deal." The Owner clears his throat and puts his back to the stone, facing the same way as Jonas, looking out over the waves.

"Ladies—!" he says, grabbing the attention of two women walking in

opposite directions, wearing fisheye sunglasses and knee-high leather boots. He passes his hand over the faded cypress tree on his shirt before beginning again. "Gentle—men—! If there are any left out there in this harsh, winding, windy, and wasteful world of ours!" His voice changes, his affect broad and clear, intonation inviting and annunciation crisp: the voice of a performer. People are looking as they pass, but none stop. "For a paltry few cents of your six and seven figure lives you can come and witness something great, something wonderful, something full of magic and innocence!" Two boys wearing backpacks stop, one Hispanic, the other Asian, and are the first.

"Ladies! Gentlemen! You are about to witness, if you so please, an invocation of the artist! I, one Montgomery Melpo Jones, will sacrifice my corporeal being to the whims of any of the nine sisters who've brought you all the strokes of genius and masterful turns of phrase!"

"Don't taint those myths — or these boys' minds — with some fucking acid trip of yours, Monty." A beat cop, obviously familiar with the Owner of the corner, interrupts the scene and steps in front of the boys. Jonas shifts to his left, sliding with chisel and hammer still in hand. His hands begin to sweat and he slowly puts them on the ground, sitting on them to hide. A bolt of anger rips through his chest aimed at this homeless man talking like a preacher, threatening his work. The Owner's demeanor reverts back to his introductory slang and his shoulders slouch back to their accustomed posture of defeat.

"Go solve some real fuckin crimes, donut diva. I needta eat, and if the kids wanna hear a story, let'em listen.

Sides, I'm about the Word now," he says as he pulls a cross made of cypress hanging from his dingy neck on a shoelace as proof. "Devil outta me now," his voice lower, rubbing the crook of his right elbow.

"You watch your mouth," taking a step forward and lowering his voice.

"Look, Samson," says the Owner, lowering his voice and stepping closer to the officer so the boys couldn't hear him. "This ain't no crazy shit I'm spoutin bout. Sreal: shit's Greek, man! Look I'm tryin, Samson, I'm tryin! You know this ain't—"

"Right, right, right, Monty, I know, I know. Like I haven't heard this shit from you or anyone of you junky fuck ups," he looks at Jonas. The officer leans in, saying "keep the fuck away from those boys," in a whisper that's meant to be heard before turning and walking away.

Jonas looks up to see the cop walking away and the two boys waiting expectantly, not knowing what drama is going to unfold next. He was through r-e-v-e before the interruption and began again on the second r, his palms drying along with the threat of losing everything. The Owner starts back up again, shoulders straight and proud, chin raised to accommodate the voice.

"Ahem!" The Owner clears his throat with dramatic flair and it's a magnet to the two boys. Jonas doesn't feel his hands stop or the anger in his belly evaporate into a mist of complete focus on every syllable and sound that flower through this stranger's mouth. He can feel his son near, but his attention is forced upon the stranger to his right, placating his grief. The Owner's voice rings out through the sea:

"Sit and search. The sand that sifts through fists once stood as the peaks of mountain top

points, worn and broken by wind from Grandfather Clock's Hands and their refusal to stop spinning.

Sit and ask: who can navigate the gears? Who tightens the Loosening bolt?

Sit and think: would you keep that mountain top for yourself In defiance of that One Truth? Or would your hands hold you humbled as hostage in the face of laws that weren't written — of laws that simply are?

Sit

and

Search.

Grab the bolt or grab the hammer? Tighten and save or swing and

—defy All that came before and every strand that might have been.

But you cannot be the eternal rebel. We walk under the mercy of those Hands and mettle you may, for now. Wander in wonder and may you be merry, but you will never escape the need to stand and decide."

Despite constant movement of the body and feet of the sea, silence manages to settle on the two boys and the Owner. The rhythm of Jonas' chisel starting up again melts into the white noise of detail. He has finished the spine of all 28 letters and is retracing them with his fingers, finding nicks to smooth and honing exact lines, maneuvering both hands behind his back. The Owner's shoulders liquefy back down to their normal, relaxed position and his slang-infused speech returns, trying to hustle a few cents

out of the boys. They're still transfixed in the moment, trying to understand what just happened and digest the system of words just spoken to them. The Hispanic boy reaches in his jeans pocket, the Owner already ignoring him — moving on to good old fashioned begging — and doesn't see both sets of young eyes are still magnetized to his face. The boy drops in a soft piece of gum and a thick eraser, leaving his three quarters and a nickel in the opposite pocket. Both boys look at each other, bewildered, and walk away.

Jonas stops twice over the next five hours, swapping in fresh chisels for the finer details of the letters. Those two times and the mangled chords he strums on his high school guitar are the only things that keep the Owner around. Jonas barely notices the presence of this other, doesn't register the money in the case or the cut that's taken from his unsought-after confidant. He doesn't feel himself sleep but assumes that he must. Whenever he swallows and there's a twang that he remembers is pain, he gingerly asks the Owner for a hot cup of water, which is placed at his side a few minutes after his request. Half the reason for the water drinking is to keep the blood flowing in his hands, the warmth triggering something in his blood vessels, reminding his body that it was still working—somehow, somehow—and the other reason is to let the cup in its entirety fall down his throat and into his stomach so it can sit and burn. A few passers-by think this is part of his act, that it worked somehow into his guitar playing. They attribute his boiled, wretched stare to his acting ability, ignoring the shiver of fear that drips down their spine as they walk.

Maxima debetur puero reverentia is finished and Jonas is tired of doing everything behind his back — of hiding

his work, concealing his art. He stands in the morning air, unaware how long he'd been sitting, and arches his back, his grey eyes pausing on an all-blue sky. His clogged memory drags up images of a time when that color and that sky and these people would bring him happiness, of a time when he could remember what feeling was. His hands trace over the few completed words. The (ex)father levels his eyes and sees Freddy's face in the stone before making his first strike: noting the depth of the jaw, each line of hair, thin lips that curve on the right in a perpetual smirk, his mother's nose. The lucidity of the face that Jonas sees in the lifeless stone stirs a moment that sits unblemished in his mind forever:

The three of them, late summer, when the nights are cool but the ground is still hot from the day, and the early morning leaves traces of breath in front of your face, no . . . at first it was the two of them — him and Cynthia — a Monday morning, both of them had called out to work with plans of making love. They did. Cynthia hugging her knees with her head turned to the side, cheek resting on kneecap, looking at Jonas who was half sitting half lying; the love was slow and warm and they hadn't stopped staring each other in the eyes even now, almost twenty minutes after the act. Their gaze almost broke but the sound of Freddy waking up and talking to his action figures about what they were going to do for the day wouldn't let them look at anything but each other, until the young king ran into the room. He knew they were still home because the housekeeper wasn't there making his breakfast. Jonas wasn't aware moments like this can exist, the perfect harmonic string of events with each silver thread wrapping around themselves just like those three sets of

arms around those three separate but forever together bodies.

A horn brays and the Owner of the corner tells Jonas that it's just a request for him to pick up his guitar. The only thing Jonas thinks about when he makes the first strike — almost diagonal, down from right to left — is how many feet of road Freddy was splattered over, how the boy turned to almost liquid on contact, and how it was he who'd called him across the street.

Something resembling days pass. The Owner gives a nudge whenever a cop comes within a block or so, and Jonas sits slowly, puts down his hammer and chisel to pick up his guitar. The cups of hot water become more frequent as general shapes begin to emerge from Jonas' slow work into the stone. The water becomes tea when the Owner finally notices the fine detail of a cheek, the wisps of hair and the globe of an eye.

Four days are gone, and Jonas can feel the zinc and ammonium nitrate sitting across the street and around corners, can see the chemical reactions bouncing off of each other in his mind as he takes a half step back from his work. Only the details are left.

Two more days go by, and Jonas tells the Owner he should leave, should walk away and keep going, and the odd display of emotion from the brick-faced man is made serious by the complete lack of motion and life in his face. Jonas bends over and picks up the guitar to give it to the Owner of the corner, and nudges the case with his

foot. Montgomery Melbo Jones nods and for a second they meet eyes.

Every line is smooth, every pore and fold of skin rendered perfectly. In Jonas' pocket is the cordless home telephone, modified after the chemical purchases, ready to be used. He removes it and holds it in his hand. He runs his hand over his son's face and puts his right hand over his top left breast pocket, and whispers "No one will ever forget you."

When Jonas presses the TALK button, five separate explosions will detonate the intersection around his son. The explosives are loaded in large Rubbermaid bins; three are packed in a specific manner with a high density plastic that will deflect the explosion, pushing the force of memory and anguish and guilt in very specific, calculated directions. When Jonas presses the TALK button, two buildings will be completely razed and three partially destroyed; 1,732 people will die and 439 will be injured, 22 permanently crippled; 112 airports will be shut down; business on the entire planet will cease for a full 27 hours. When Jonas presses the TALK button, buildings will collapse in such a manner that standing in the center of a small crater will be the corner of a building with a young boy's face etched into it, with the words *maxima debetur puero reverentia* resting below the serene countenance. When Jonas presses the TALK button, he will walk into a wall of flame bearing only his love for a lost child and the knowledge that the world will forever know he existed.





Dorian Sanders



# Cambridge: A Love Poem

Andrew Chenevert

63

For every scummy side street where the stench of rising sewage tarnishes the city's beauty  
— I will stand  
For every piss-shoving, entitled, hipster, Ivy-League elitist suckling from Daddy's wallet  
— I will stand  
For all the disenchanting night-shift CVS employees, listening to j-pop on their phone as  
customers fumble with self check out machines  
— I will stand  
For every discordant, ear breaking melody played by this hissing of subway trains  
— I will stand  
For every ritzy clothing shop, charging 100 dollars for sweatshop products or tanned hides  
— I will stand  
For every Clear Channel billboard, a hulking behemoth blocking the skyline  
— I will stand  
For every empty permit-only parking lot, not willing to open its doors to travelers  
— I will stand  
For every flooded street accumulating dead leaves after a rain storm  
— I will stand

Cambridge, my love, come, let me wash away your blemishes.  
When all the dirt is off...  
I will see your face, oh cultural Mecca, oh last refuge for the bookstore,  
I have seen your face; your eyes are made of records

I have seen your face; the snaking Charles is your smile  
I have seen your face; your nose is a marble bridge  
I have seen your face; your beard is made of trees  
I have seen who you are; your heart is our heart  
I have known who you are.

Without a glance between them, he glides  
up to her right side and projects over the coffeehouse  
soundtrack,  
“I insist on buying you a tea.”  
The unnerved brunette twenty-something  
orders a venti passion tea  
and steps to the left.  
The man in the electric wheelchair  
maneuvers around the display of  
insulated cold cups in pursuit  
of a double tall nonfat cappuccino with two Splendas  
and a phone number.  
By now everyone has heard him identify the  
remodeling since the last time he was here  
five years ago.

Adjusting his direction  
he follows shortly behind  
and, detecting her fleeting interest,  
confirms that there are  
two Splendas in his coffee.

## Observation, 1662 Mass. Ave.

Kasey Lingley

Thinking of you teaches me how to use  
a power drill. It walks me down the street to  
buy a snack and a broom to clean up the mess.  
It sends me on spur of the moment trips across  
the country and makes me new friends.

It makes me smell better. It takes me on blind dates.  
It runs up my phone bill. It helps me research  
the 1980s, the Pacific Northwest, and French  
cooking. It writes me a new-age nutrition plan.  
It takes me to the gym that I hate.

Thinking of you makes me sit in traffic. It sits  
with me in traffic. It buys me tequila. It buys me time.  
It puts the over-priced vegetables back in the fridge.  
It yells at the dog. It puts holes in my walls.  
It tells me exactly what is wrong with me.

It sends me to bed early and spends more  
time at work. It undresses me down to sinew  
and bone. It abandons me and chases me down.  
It devours generosity and licks at my tear ducts  
until they open. It nourishes me.

Thinking of you pleads insanity. It skins my knees  
and talks to me like a child. It criticizes and praises me.  
It walks my nerves like a tightrope. It flashes me a  
believable smile. It claws at my sides and leaves me  
with fault lines. It hates me. It tells me I am beautiful.

It is ugly. It spreads my ribcage apart and sets it on  
the nightstand by the bed. It slides down the staircase  
and out the door. It returns weeks later with flowery words.  
It is stronger than me. It is weak. It lies, then comes clean.  
It stands up for me. It lets me down.

Thinking of you does not love me.

## Thinking of You

Christine Jozitis

## The Sunsick Gardener

Tyler Burdwood

was weak and without spirit  
when the planted started stirring and moaned to him.

His dry hands floated down  
to tend to all these spirits  
since the planet which had bore him had asked him to.

# I Am, I Am

**Phyllis Duff**

I see blue eyes  
dilated pupils,  
a smile, suddenly a blank face

I'm not expecting anything more  
And I'm certainly not expecting anything less

The reflection reveals someone else and suddenly,  
I realize there is pain behind its eyes

There are invisible bruises underneath its skin,  
There is fear inside of this reflection,  
but what it fears I cannot tell.

The reflections face is calm like the sea after storm,  
but waves always seem to disturb it

the maturity lies in the heart of the reflection  
but confidence is written on the surface

music flows out of its fingers, and it inhales sarcasm  
I feel connected to the reflection,  
Conjoined like Siamese twins  
but separated by glass.

A few seconds pass, eyebrows raise  
Now I feel overwhelmed when I witness the truth,  
I cannot hide anything from the reflection for it catches  
every breath, every movement, and every thought that zips in and out of my mind.

This is who I am,

And I am one of a kind.

# The Ultimate Destiny of the Elements as They Undergo Mankind's Reliance Upon Providence

**Kelly Tehan Jankauskas**

And the earth will stay  
And the sky will stay  
And the ocean will stay





Corinne Dasti

We sat in a circle and sang to you.  
 Your best friend and his guitar,  
 300 souls that saw behind your carelessness,  
 found that magic inside you.  
 Strung together, limbs and hands,  
 squeeze tight enough maybe it'll get better,  
 sing loud enough maybe you'll hear,  
 pretend you left the way you wanted,  
 maybe that will make it true.

Could you hear us singing, Or was it screaming?  
 Cracked lips forced apart;  
 every tired eye afraid to blink.  
 Our un-kept minds running in circles,  
 running in place.  
 There is no start or finish,  
 only your absence.

Your arrogant grin had teased us  
 for years, we had laughed  
 at the way you lived, the way you lived for nothing  
 but the things that destroyed you.

Now you are a black and white photograph.  
 You are a life summed up in five lines.  
 You are the face on the front page.  
 You are the shadow,  
 following your first and only love.  
 You are the word "Angel"  
 washed away by the rain.

## I'd Rather Live Than Live Forever

Brittany Johnson

Once upon a time I was a Catholic School girl,  
 memorizing The Apostle's Creed,  
 The Lord's Prayer.  
 "Lead me not into temptation",  
 but tempted I remain.  
 You creep into my being.  
 Make me shiver,  
 make me moan.

Deliver me, deliver me,  
 tempt me to taste that fruit.  
 My daily bread.

Forgive me my trespasses,  
 but you are of mischief, of lust.  
 Your words, like wine,  
 sink deep into my mind.

Lead me not into depravation.  
 Thus, to Hell I will go,  
 lead me into temptation.  
 The best of sins  
 are those with a promise of passion, of pain.

Deliver us our evil.  
 Amen.

## Our Sexuality, Who Art in Guilt

Meaghan Lis

I remember everything about that night.

Her long fingers and how she held my face

while placing her warm lips upon mine.

The way our jaws aligned

the distinct smell of her skin

her neck

my warm breath

her, quivering;

the vision of her eyes closed as she created a rhythm moving her body

like sound waves traveling at decibels louder than an orchestra.

## Speed

Parthena Lambrianidis

# Ode to the Heart Shaped Leaf You Gave Me One Afternoon

**Melissa Streffacio**

You were so very green as you laid by the side of the curb.  
 And such a perfect, very perfect shade of green at that,  
 like the bright light green of a granny smith apple.  
 And your shape, what a unique and wonderful shape you were.  
 What a beautiful and funny thing nature did right there,  
 and created a thing such as you- oh you!  
 With the perfectly formed little humps, and a point opposite.  
 Like the little shapes school children draw all over there papers.  
 And the design was crisp and fresh, unlike any other!  
 You were the perfect little leaf on that long dark curb.  
 Out of all of the leaves you were probably the best.  
 And I watched as she bent right down and picked you up, oh glorious you,  
 and handed you to me, a grin on face "this is for you".  
 And I took you in my hand, and brought you before my eyes,  
 you were so lovely than.  
 I twirled the stem and made you dance.  
 And your stem, was of just the perfect length.  
 I glanced at you, a pleased look on my face.  
 And together you sat in the palm of my hand,  
 and I could not hear a single thing said to me that day.  
 For you were perfect.  
 And you sat on my desk, for days on end.  
 I looked at you every now and then.  
 But you sat, and you curled, and you grew old.  
 You weren't so perfect anymore.  
 But I still loved you, my perfect formed leaf.  
 You were still perfect in my mind.  
 Even the day I had to throw you away,  
 when you'd grown too old and gray, and didn't have-  
 much of any form left at all.  
 It was a sad day, and I couldn't help but remembering,  
 how perfectly green you once were.



**Katherine Frangos**



# In The Field the Stones are Sharp and Glimmering

James Nutter

He told me he hadn't slept that night.  
Had climbed a tree, found love in his sight  
and scribed why in an essay; interesting flight.

In fifteen minutes he needs to work  
but in the pines ahead continues to lurk;  
the agony of repetition, finally he listens.

He takes leave halfway through the day.  
His words and cafe' cartwheel made us pray;  
Temporary! Don't let this stay!

Evidently he lost it, night before last.  
Went bat-shit today, I'm told a bowl was passed;  
A cruel potion had set all in motion fast.

Barely audible code, his enthrall,  
Nonsense spewed upon the wall,  
a mess strewn through the sister's dolls.

That step-drunk continues his faulty spews;  
His bullshit conspiracist news.  
"Well, he needs to go to those money-grubbing,  
step-son stealing doctors at the state hospital.

Douche."

Your hair looks red underwater, long, slithering,  
Medusa tendrils floating, light as smoke,  
bright against the cyan-colored lining of your parents' swimming pool.  
Diamonds of light from the world above us are dancing on your cheeks, and  
I don't feel nearly as graceful as you look,  
but soon we'll have to go back to chlorine-scented towels,  
tuna sandwiches,  
and pitchers of too-sweet pink lemonade,  
shivering knock-kneed beneath the patio umbrella  
until the water and the sunlight  
warm us up again.

## Summer

Kate Szumita

Walking through the pines and maples,  
A cooling breeze flows through too.

They say a dozen young souls were lost,  
behind the hospital, in the brush;  
lost, forgotten, an unpleasant end.  
Families had thrown, disowned, abandoned:  
sons, nephews, brothers gone astray.  
We found the stones that day,  
creeping through a mess of branches,  
a century old tangle of brambles,  
the old plot map set us on our way;  
his father had bought it on eBay.  
So we bike, and hike, and mark the path,  
leaving disaster in our wake.  
The journey, the mission, afternoons spent:  
trudging, slashing, bashing through ruined walls.  
A chimney here, the foundation there,  
the lot out back the dead have shared;  
found, remembered, we can give praise  
to those who lost their later days.

A silent reflection on an afternoon breeze,  
shade slowly stretching from the trees,  
the purpose lost behind brutal reality;  
life has always had its casualties.

...  
The sun will set in about an hour,  
we must go now, it may shower,  
the clouds have rolled, the sky rumbled;  
pass a last goodbye, they have been humbled.

## Lyman School for Boys

James Nutter

## Reaching Perfection

Chelsea Quackenbush

This is the moment every athlete dreams about. Blood, sweat, and tears are no longer and smiles take over. The gratitude on the faces of weary bodies illustrates a sign of relief of the hard work that is now over. Staring out into the abyss of flashes and bright lights, trying to find that one central point to focus on. Loving arms and affections being ready to greet the champions. No matter the outcome the smiles would still be bittersweet. This signifies the end of greatness; the dynasty that has been built now changes. The new replaces the old and the cycle continues to search for this same feeling and this same moment captured in time. The emotions are real; those could never be replaced. The embraces and the gestures are reactions to happiness and each individual gets to keep that remembrance for now and forever. The feeling cannot be explained or mimicked; it happens as it happens, but isn't that what being caught up in the moment is all about? The future is uncertain to those leaving, but this sisterhood is a forever kind of thing; the memories and the bonds could never be forgotten.

"Respect the process"  
Who is this process anyway,  
And what is it doing for me?

It's trapped me  
it's become my process  
to examine it.

When I try to get away from it  
try a new thought pro...  
see it almost got me again.

I'll have a snack to clear my mind  
but even my cheese is processed  
nice try.

## Process

Nicholas Bridges



Corinne Dasti

since you are not a Sunflower  
And I am not a Rose,  
I can grow to love you more  
than all your fingers  
and your toes.

## Grow to Love

Leah Laplaca



### I. On The End of a Recipe

To three cups of well-sifted all-purpose flour  
Add liquid ingredients, stir to combine,  
Then bake at three hundred degrees for an hour.

The egg yolk and butter and dollop of sour  
Cream add a rich texture and decadent shine  
To three cups of well-sifted all-purpose flour.

Store batter, well covered, in ice box for now, or,  
If feeling impatient for something divine,  
Then bake at three hundred degrees for an hour.

Your friends, when they try this, are likely to shower  
Their praise on your head for the way you've refined  
Your three cups of well-sifted all-purpose flour.

Bake longer if you think your oven lacks power,  
But mostly this recipe comes out just fine  
When baked at three hundred degrees for an hour.

It sounds very rich, but there's no need to cower.  
It's heaven with coffee or sweet Muscat wine.  
Use three cups of well-sifted all-purpose flour,  
And bake at three hundred degrees for an hour.

### II. Thoroughly Tiresome Advice

Don't count up your chickens before they are hatched.  
Don't dump out the bathtub with baby still in.  
It's too late to lock up once horse has been snatched.

Don't call kettles black if with pots you are matched  
Or cast the first stone if you're not without sin.  
Don't count up your chickens before they are hatched.

Don't motor on tires that aren't properly patched  
Or when you've had too many ounces of gin.  
It's too late to lock up once horse has been snatched.

Don't think a thing's free, it may have strings attached.  
Don't handle things when you don't know where they've been.  
Don't count up your chickens before they are hatched.

Don't put away guns where the door can't be latched  
Or get in the ring if you have a glass chin.  
It's too late to lock up once horse has been snatched.

And don't keep your eggs in one basket all batched.  
Can't finish a thing? Well, then, just don't begin!  
Don't count up your chickens before they are hatched.  
It's too late to lock up once horse has been snatched.

### III. For James D.

A Romulan warbird sits off the port bow,  
She's arming disruptors, preparing to fire.  
Scotty, we need those deflector shields now!

The bridge crew and I are all wondering how  
We'll avoid hearing harps and a heavenly choir.  
A Romulan warbird sits off the port bow.

Those pointy-eared bastards are bidding us "ciao"  
And hoping to fry us before they retire.  
Scotty, we need those deflector shields now!

The admirals at Star Fleet will all have a cow  
When they hear how the Enterprise came to expire  
A Romulan warbird sits off the port bow

Our exit the Romulans wouldn't allow.  
We have run out of time and are down to the wire.  
Scotty, we need those deflector shields now!

Our side didn't start this deplorable row  
But now we must flee this predicament dire.  
A Romulan warbird sits off the port bow  
Scotty, we need those deflector shields now!

## Three Villanelles

**Richard Cranford**

# The Assassin

**Anonymous**

So there it sits, the dusty and damned wall clock  
 Condemned for all its foolishness and thievery.  
 And all that can be heard is the never-ending tick-tock,  
 Like the whistle of an unfair referee.

My fingers are gripping the insistent hour hand  
 As it slowly approaches the end of time.  
 My eyes detest the minute man  
 The lonely, little one with no companion.

The moments are going, gone, went — lost in the past,  
 Though their inevitable departure came as no surprise.  
 The images tattooed in my brain are all that will last,  
 Sepia tone memories rendering my unheard battle cries.

Causing my days, weeks, and years, to wear thin,  
 So seemingly innocent sits the assassin.

Unplug.  
 Jesus Christ.  
 Your head is full of noise  
 And your eyes are so full of bright.  
 You squint for the sun  
 And live for the red&blue-wires  
 Sssnaking (ha!) their way  
 Through the real muscle of your bedroom wall.  
 Consider this: others exist.  
 Go find 'em,  
 At least behold another pale face.  
 There's cars and footsteps and the  
 Onomatopoeic sounds  
 You only see in pixilated comic books  
 Over your face-stained pillow case.  
 Open yourself up;  
 There's so much.

## 0010110101

**Kelly Tehan Jankauskas**

# Conflict Scene

Lyndsey Carpenter

Scene opens on an empty sidewalk. Riley quickly crosses the stage, hands stuffed in her coat pockets. She gets halfway across the stage when Nate appears running after her.

NATE  
Riley! Wait! Riley!

RILEY  
(Turns slightly and slows, visibly shaken at seeing Nate.)  
Nate.  
(Pause)  
Hi.

NATE  
Have you talked to Jeannie?

RILEY  
Not for awhile.  
(Pause)  
Why?

NATE  
Because I want to know why she's doing it.

RILEY  
(Uneasy)  
I can't  
(Pause)  
I'm not speaking on her behalf. And honestly, I don't feel comfortable talking about it at all.

NATE  
Why?  
(He reaches out and grabs her arm forcibly.)  
Why can't you talk about it?

RILEY  
Nate, let go.  
(She tries tugging her arm free and fails.)  
Please.

NATE  
No. Not until you tell me why the hell she won't talk to me.

RILEY  
That hurts!  
(Looks down at her arm.)  
NATE  
I don't give a damn.  
(Hint of anger in his voice)  
Why haven't you talked to her?

RILEY  
(Stumbling, trying to keep calm)  
We've...  
(Pause)  
We've both been really busy.

NATE  
That's not good enough.  
(Lets go of her arm)  
Take out your phone.

RILEY  
What?

NATE  
Take. Out. Your. Phone.

RILEY  
No, Nate.  
(Becoming less scared and standing up to him)

NATE  
(Pulls a knife with a jet hilt from his pocket quickly)  
Do it Riley.

RILEY  
(Realizes she has heard about that knife before)  
Nate  
(Pause)  
Don't do this again. Please. Here.  
(Takes out her phone)  
See? I have it out.

NATE  
(Frantic and choked up)



I don't want the fucking thing! I want you to make her... to...  
(He lowers the knife)

RILEY  
(As if reassuring a child)  
I can't make her do anything.

NATE  
(Yelling and raises the knife)  
I want her to love me God damn it!

RILEY  
I know  
(Pause)

Give me the knife Nate. Please don't do this to another person.

NATE  
CALL HER!

RILEY  
No. I can't make her drop the charges; I can't make her love  
you. I haven't even talked to her in a few weeks!

NATE  
(Grabs Riley's arm again and brings her so close to him  
that her face is inches from his. Talks softly)  
You're... lying.

RILEY  
No. I'm not.  
(Voice trying to be calm)  
Nate, just give me that thing and —  
(Pause)  
I'll try.

NATE  
(Icy tone)  
I don't believe you.

RILEY  
Trust me.  
(Puts her hand on his arm)

NATE  
I couldn't trust Jeannie either.  
(Draws Riley closer, raises his arm and slits her throat)  
That's why I tried to do what I did to her.

Nate drops Riley's body and walks calmly off stage. Riley's phone, now an inch from  
her hand, goes off. "Genie in a Bottle" is the ringtone.



**Leanna Leon**

deep blue flowing waves  
in and out,  
the breath you cannot  
wait to take.  
the rough exposure  
against vast colorful skies  
serenity, peace of mind.

standing out against  
words  
no one understands  
freedom from judgment  
to lay in the sand.

## Peace of Mind

**Leah Laplaca**

I can remember waking up and fighting the urge  
To punch the nurse holding my arms down

The reminisce of anesthesia make me purge  
What I wasn't allowed to eat for breakfast

I could feel the bile bubbling in the bottom of my throat

It hurt to breathe

It felt like that man that sits on everyone's chest  
From time to time was jumping

I could see the ceiling tiles passing over my head  
1...2...3...

I lose count

The drowsiness takes over; I succumb.

## Resist

**Rebecca Washburn**

Shadowed scythe  
fades  
to grey,  
fades  
to white  
star.

Blue evening sky,  
a bell rings  
clear  
yet so  
far  
away.

Time  
transparent  
no  
longer  
use  
full.

Love  
whispers  
beyond the  
veil  
of  
identity.

Cats  
stare contentedly  
through  
the  
empty  
space.

I  
no longer  
wonder  
what  
they  
see.

## Translucence

Roxan McKinnon

## Hidden

Ashley Delgado

Hidden,  
Standing anxiously against a massive moral structure,  
Life's mobility on hold,  
Communication shut,  
and furthermore locked away.  
Trapped and unseen,  
Seeking, seeking, seeking,  
an open world.  
Mundane is the lifestyle They wish upon us,  
It is what They have taught us,  
or so They think.  
Find your way.  
They mean nothing.  
I am here waiting.



# Side A, Side B

Rachel Simon

93

when we first meet  
it is summer  
and i spot you at the town pool  
your chiseled back arousing

and before i know it  
you spot me too  
tell me i'm cute  
"here's my number" you say  
and i blush  
hard

everyone says we won't last  
"you're too different" my girlfriends say over  
steaming black cups of coffee  
but somehow  
violins at night and kisses under covers  
make us work

you tell me you love me  
on our twenty-seventh date  
on my twenty-fifth birthday  
a candle golden in a cake  
you ordered  
from my favorite bakery

things start to shake  
like californian earthquakes  
when we move in together  
a little apartment in the dirtiest part of town  
my mother does not approve

"you're living in sin" she yaps on the phone  
i cover the speaker with my hand and sigh  
"i don't give a shit" and hang up

thanksgiving and christmas are your two favorite holidays  
so i try to make them special  
but the family dinners we attend are horrible  
the turkey is burnt  
and the presents suck  
questions of when you will propose  
make me sick

i try not to notice  
when you come home later and later

we crack ourselves  
like china plates  
on hard wood floors

we smash ourselves  
until we can't  
breathe  
anymore

"i'm sorry"  
you say  
your cold fingertips on my shoulder  
"sorry doesn't cut it"  
i want to say  
but instead i keep my mouth shut

i am raw from breaking  
my skin aches  
red and calloused

you once said  
"you're perfect  
just the way you are"  
i gave you a full moon grin  
my peacoat the color of your hair  
and in response i said "thanks mr. hallmark card"

but tonight mr. hallmark card is  
an angsty teen emo song  
and i'm  
a porcelain doll  
played with too often

i fall asleep to the violin you still practice  
don't know why  
you suck at it  
i dream of throwing all my clothes  
in my suitcases  
and getting the hell out of here  
be done with you

but i know when  
the sun rises orange like a creamsicle  
i won't  
i'll stay right here  
legs entwined with yours  
buried in white cotton sheets

i can't leave you  
i love you

# Common thought



Chris Chew

Hand in hand walks  
through city centers  
looking for war memorials

Staying in on Friday nights  
watching *Gilmore Girls* and  
old black and white movies

Having to think about the pain  
before you get up  
arthritis is a bitch.

Eating and liking all  
vegetables especially  
brussel sprouts and asparagus

Flannel nighties, to bed  
at ten-thirty, watching *Seinfeld*  
and *Murder She Wrote*

Without knowing the truth  
I'd guess I were sixty-five.

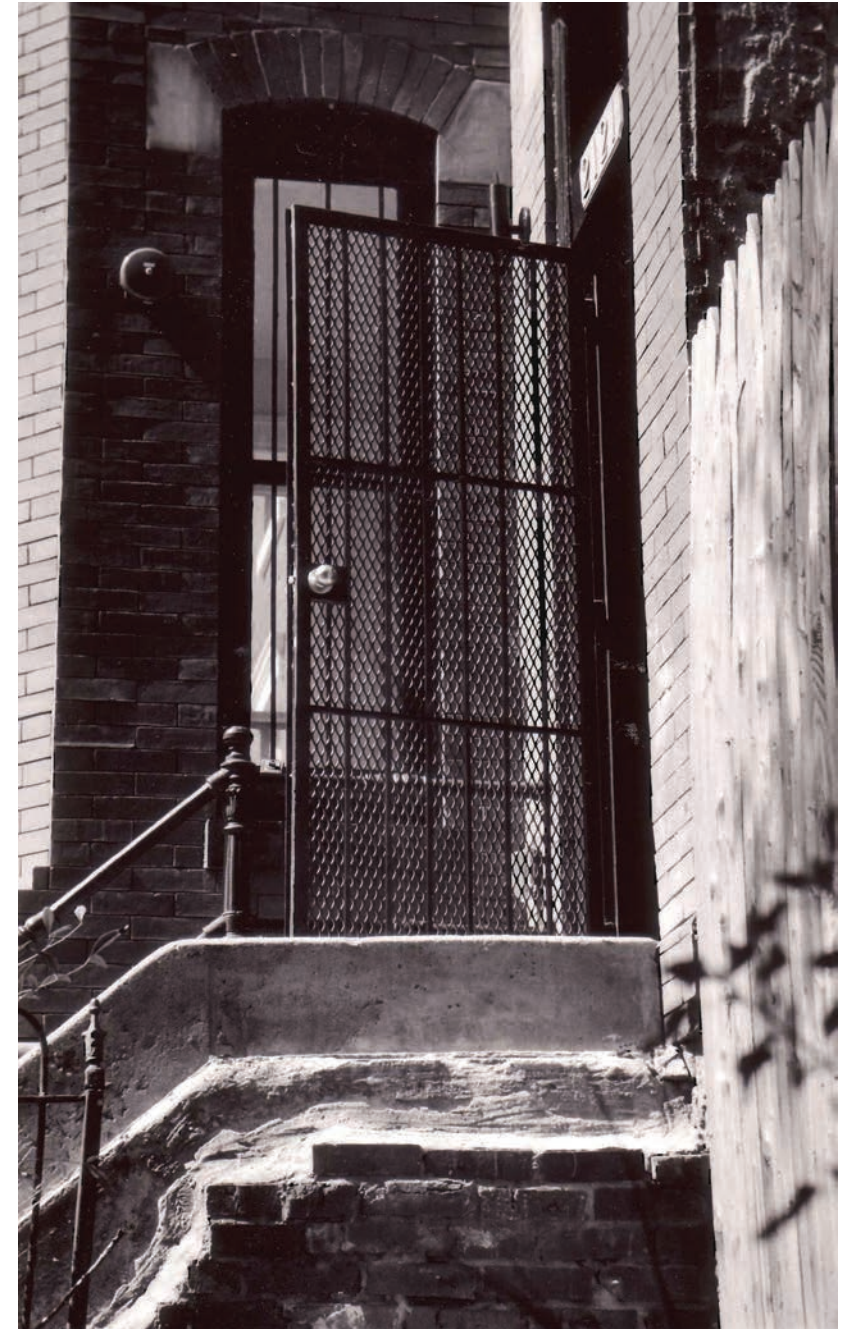
## Sixty-Five

Rebecca Washburn

Star-crossed by your dilemma  
 from your new found ivory-sanguine  
 disposition. We know—we're sick  
 of your cup half full ideals but you've  
 been pushed to the edge  
 of the diving board  
 "Instead of jumping down,  
 I will jump up" is your decision  
 after applying your experimental  
 point of view. Truly you will  
*cross the stars* if you jump up—  
 but when? When will you stop?  
 When will your *shining* optimism be  
 struck down by our *shooting* pessimism?  
 I imagine two gunslingers—  
 both in trench coats and adorned fedora  
 morphed cowboy hats. We are in black  
 and you are in white. 10 paces.  
 Back to back. We glance  
 over our shoulder. You do not.  
 9, 8, this dusty scene is too  
 cliché but it happens again  
 and again in different ways.  
 7, you did choose up, after all.  
 6, two *whispers* ring in both  
 of your ears, 5... It is a matter  
 of which you want to listen to?  
 4, 3, the *angel*, 2, or the  
*devil*? 1, draw.

## Crows Flew from the Trees Chasing the Echoes of a Gunshot

Marcella Muscatell



Untitled / Anonymous



Fall breathes  
 Into the last days of summer  
 Foreshadowing busy days to come

Anticipation seeps into my blood  
 As the wind tosses leaves  
 Towards the-setting sun

The wind grows  
 Annoyed with the trees  
 The tiniest branches refuse to let go

They stand like resistant flames  
 On a birthday cake  
 Flicker and wink  
 But protest no matter how hard you blow

The chill kicks in  
 Nothing lasts forever  
 Torn apart  
 Even if they want to stay together

It won't take much time  
 Till every leaf will have to fall  
 That's how it always is  
 Yes, even stubborn leaves fall

Leaves decompose and mingle with the roots  
 And there may be mourning at the end  
 But they will return to their home  
 Be one with the tree again

## Stubborn Leaves

**Katie Zeitz**

The oven is dilapidated with green peppers  
 That crawled out of the scalding saucepan.  
 Some may have escaped  
 For others, it's too late.  
 The flames char their skin.  
 She comes in to remove the casualties.  
 She seems to be the only mourner.  
 Their final resting place: the trash can in the corner.

## Mom's Kitchen

**Rebecca Washburn**

## Plants Need Love to Grow But...

**Nicki Blodgett**

Each phrase saturated with  
 declarations of spiny ardor,  
 your fondness sprouts  
 as if from  
 soggy paper towels  
 in the dark.

# The Devil Went Down To Ashland

Jennifer Leavey

"I sold my soul for off-brand snack mix," I told my sister in an online conversation a few weeks ago.

She was not fazed, given my situation. All she had to say was this:

"At least it must have tasted better than a fiddle of gold."

And she was right. Every savory square of rice cereal I ate that afternoon smacked of sweet rebellion.

I had suffered from temporomandibular joint (TMJ) problems ever since I was twelve, when my jaw locked at a friend's birthday, and would not budge for an hour. The only real symptoms I noticed after that were the fascinatingly disgusting clicking noises I could make when I moved my jaw from side to side, and how I could crack my jaw both at a higher rate of volume and ease than anyone else I knew.

Matters with my jaw joint remained status quo until the summer of 2009, when my jaw pain climaxed at an extremely unfortunate moment, and I had the most awkward dentist's appointment of my life. I got the diagnosis of a sprained jaw, and, fortunately, no one asked me the circumstances of my injury. The hygienist had either read the shame on my face, or seen many mysterious "sprained jaws" in her day.

I should probably have foreseen the shit hitting the fan about my jaw at that point, but I

remained blissfully ignorant until this past summer, when my jaw became impossible to ignore. It started to become increasingly difficult to open my mouth beyond a centimeter or so. When I laughed or yawned or coughed or sneezed, the pain was a lightning bolt across the front of my face. The noises my jaw made sounded like someone was trying to start a rusted Impala engine somewhere between my chin and cheekbones. My jaw got stuck for twenty painful minutes on a date.

An oral surgeon gave me the bad news in September. My TMJ had potentially deteriorated to the point where I would need surgery. I would have to give up gum, which was better at calming me than any short-acting anxiety medication, I would have to get an MRI, kissing was strictly verboten, and I was to start a soft diet immediately. Instead of the FDA food pyramid, my TMJ food pyramid followed something like Bland, Blander, and Blandest. The irony of this treatment plan is that I am in recovery from an eating disorder, and am encouraged to eat a variety of foods. I was immediately caught in that special purgatory where one treatment plan contraindicated another... and it tasted strangely like vanilla pudding.

My body was inundated with vanilla pudding. I had never had so much of it in my life. My meals consisted of one pudding cup after another while I was at

school, alternated perhaps with a container of yogurt, and ice cream or applesauce for dinner. I had mashed potatoes when I was feeling especially daring. At night, I had dreams of munching on crispy pizza crusts and biting into juicy Macintosh apples. By the end of the second day on the soft diet, I declared that I would throw down for somebody's pretzels. I wasn't kidding. I was riding the bus back from school that day, and someone sitting in front of me had the nerve to eat a burrito on the ride. The movements of eating something solid were intoxicating. The scents of pico de gallo and rice and chicken made me want to bowl the poor man over and steal his food. I managed to restrain myself then, but this incident presaged my eventual fall to the salty temptation of snack mix.

A week after I was sadly separated from solid foods, I went to my parents' house for the weekend. This was no surprise. They had free laundry and better food than I bought on my bare-bones student budget. I walked between the pantry and the refrigerator, mesmerized by all of the forbidden options, for the entire weekend. I finally cracked on Sunday afternoon. I had taken to sniffing the bags of chips, crackers, and cookies. It was just too much. I needed to act before I reached a new level of crazy. I called my parents over, and briefed them on what was about to happen.

"Okay, Mom and Dad. I'm doing it. I'm going to eat solid food. I'm going to do it. I'm having a ten-minute reprieve on solid food. This bag of Chex Mix? It's mine. Do not disturb me. We are going to have a moment."

My ten minutes with the Chex Mix were glorious. I had never appreciated the interplay of flavors in a bag of snack mix that much, how the sweetness of the Wheat Chex blended perfectly with the savory rye chips and the fluffy Corn Chex, and how the added spices almost made my mouth sing with a feeling it never got from eating pudding.

I finally put the bag back, and noticed something I hadn't seen before.

"Hey, Mom!" I started laughing.

"What, Jennifer. What's so funny? Don't laugh so hard. You're going to dislocate your jaw again."

"This isn't even real Chex Mix. I broke down for Market Basket brand fake Chex Mix. It figures. I risked jaw disfigurement for store-brand snacks."

"Well, saving a nickel is important! And, look, your jaw is fine. See, no harm, no foul."

I had sold my soul for knock-off party mix. I had to tell my sister about this. Only she would truly appreciate my plight. My mother's love of coupon-cutting and saving cents here and there could have actually killed me this time.

# Dirty Carrots

Suzanne Cope

I am about to walk down the street with dirty carrots. It doesn't seem like anything earth shattering — just me, at dusk, walking back from my community garden plot during a break in the clouds on a rainy late summer day. But now that I really think about it: today is the first time I have ever even seen a dirty carrot. Sure, I have bought carrots at the grocery store — organic carrots even. And carrots from the local farmer's market with a bit of dirt still clinging to some crevices. And I have gotten carrots from my farm share in funny shapes and sizes. This fresh vegetable obsession might have even started with the carrots from my grandmother's garden when I was young, surely eaten dipped in ranch dressing or shredded into cole slaw. Those carrots might have needed one last good washing to get the last bit of grime off, but I had still never seen a truly dirty carrot until a few minutes ago.

This is the third year of my community garden. The first year was the garden's unveiling — its transformation from a defunct gas station, cleaned up and presented to the lucky twenty who made the list of inaugural gardeners. I lived one hundred yards away and walked by the once-deserted lot every day. I called as soon as a sign announcing the forming of a community garden was posted to the fence, snow still sitting in gray drifts along the avenue. After years of growing stunted

cherry tomatoes on my shady back porch, I was excited at the chance for a better harvest and a replenishing herb supply for cooking. The garden opened on July first, with neat rows of raised beds filled with clean, trucked-in dirt, and my premier crop was tomatoes purchased as seedlings, repotted herbs from my window sill, and a late planting of eggplant — the only vegetable still clinging to life at the local nursery so long into the northeast's brief growing season. I made friends with my plot neighbors. We had weeding parties fueled by donated scones from the bakery down the street before the crops ripened, and shared herbs and a few vegetables after the harvest.

The second year I vowed to start my plants early, so I purchased a small plastic greenhouse and a dozen packs of seeds. I watched as the clear top of the greenhouse fogged with life, and the new shoots push from the dirt. But when I introduced my seedlings to life out of doors, many became squirrel food or shriveled in the still cool evenings. They had outgrown their plastic home, but were not strong enough for the real world. I supplemented the few hearty survivors with seedlings again. My surprise was a growth of dill which had reseeded itself from the previous year. Vigorous, disorganized and still learning about its environment, much like myself. I had seen the sprouts in the early days of spring, but

thought for certain that they would be killed by the late frosts of New England. But they weren't. Which got me thinking... if dill can survive the softer frosts of mid-spring, what else can?

The third year I did my homework. Kale, chard, onions, lettuce, peas, beets and carrots can all be planted in early spring. I filled the garden with these hearty seeds, the first to enter the lot of barren plots for the season. I watched as they sprouted, and steeled myself to thin my crop, knowing that it was the best, the only route to success, lest overcrowded kill my crops before squirrels or mother nature. My plot had lettuce before some gardeners even prepped for the season. I had kale and chard by late May. Beets began popping out of the soil by mid-June. Herbs — some had wintered, some from an early seeding — were spreading. Zucchini plants from the previous year decided to finally show their bright yellow flowers. I felt that this garden was my best success yet. I would finally have a bounty to share with friends and advice to give my plot neighbors whom I sometimes saw on weekends as we collectively weeded and trimmed and harvested. My garden was a thriving mix of thick rows I had sown with bursts of surprise seedlings scattered randomly among them. Which was placed where by nature or my own careless planting I wasn't certain, but my thriving unruliness gave me

a sense of pride. And then there was the row of bushy green tops. I almost mistook them for parsley as they uniformly sprouted and started to grow. But the leaves did not widen as much as their flat-leaf neighbors and one day I saw the orange coin peeking from the dirt. I monitored the orange and watched it widen. Unlike beets you cannot see how large the root is until there is no opportunity to return it to the dirt to continue to grow.

Finally, today, I noticed an inch of orange begging to be plucked. I had gone to the garden for a handful of cilantro, specifically. But how could I resist poking beneath the squash leaves, watching the flowers morph into speckled green? How could I not notice the few orange roots that were getting so wide that they started to crowd their neighbor? I decided that one needed to go. I would shred it and add it to my salad tonight. If it was small, no harm done, the other carrots needed room. But I tugged at the leafy carrot top and it released itself only by another inch, exposing its true girth. It was a big one — supermarket sized, and ready to be pulled. I tugged and twisted, and dug around the sides, trying not to disturb its smaller neighbor. I had dirt under my nails and stray carrot greens littered the gravel walkway between my plot and the next. Finally the carrot gave way, leaving a large carrot-sized hole. I pulled another, and then one more.

Now I am standing in the garden with three large dirty carrots, their green foliage dramatic, their orange more cylindrical than conical, and one with a small round growth on its side where a thin wayward root had reached out for more nutrients. Damp dirt clings to their deep grooves. These are not supermarket carrots — they are too imperfect, too real, too much a product of a little seed planted in the middle of a little plot of soil in the middle of a city. My only small bag holds a bit of delicate cilantro, thus I will have to carry the carrots home gripping their tops. I contemplate washing them, but the rain means that no watering is needed and I don't feel like unwinding the hose for a simple

spray. So I walk home clutching my bunch of carrots. Past the biker on his way back from work. Past the firemen standing in front of a duplex whose alarm had been triggered. Past the hurrying drivers and pedestrians on their cell phones. Past the man standing outside waiting for his Chinese take-out. And as I walk I think about the fact that I am walking home with a bunch of imperfect yet perfectly dirty carrots. And who, of the people I had passed, has ever seen a bunch of dirty carrots? I know I hadn't — not in the country nor the city — until that moment twenty minutes ago when I had pulled those carrots from the ground.



**Kaila Gee**  
**Siamese Twins**



# Yoga Poem

Kelly Ur

The sun rises, flooding the room with light  
Eyes open, dreams chased away by a thought  
Lay there half-sleeping for what feels like infinity  
Only to be awoken by the bleating of the alarm, now cross  
With a yawn and a stretch, silence it without an answer  
One leg at a time, toe by toe, feet touch the ground

Heels, toes connected with the solid ground  
Arms reach up to the sky and there is light  
A deep breath in, a whisper and a silent answer  
Body and mind unified into one pure thought  
Feel the pull of tendons expanding as arms cross  
Physically and mentally pulsing into infinity

Let go, loose the joints onto the world. Forget infinity.  
Lengthen cervical, thoracic, lumbar, until phalanges brush the ground  
A gentle bend to the knees, but do not allow them to cross  
In through the window streams the morning light  
Focus on the movement, do not allow thought  
Heed no call, for the poses are the only answer

The question is not the only thing, do not forget the answer  
Remember that what is true now will not outlast infinity  
In the body but without as well, do not deny thought  
Reach one leg back, lay it down, and touch fingertips to the ground  
Switch them until and feel the gentle pull, bask in the early light  
Bring feet together and stand straight up, arms out in a cross

Breathe in, breathe out. Again. Lengthen the arms of the cross  
So that they grow like vines. If the body questions, the mind will answer  
Raise the hands towards the sky, stretch the spine towards the light  
Of the heavens. Keep reaching, stretching, growing to infinity  
Let the heels and toes press down and grow roots into the ground  
As the body expands to the clods and clouds and the mind loses all thought

Clasp hands and bring them down to the chest. Allow thought  
to creep back into your mind. Revel in the slow ache from the cross  
Feel the roots retract back into your heels and separate from the ground  
When questions arise, there is no choice but to answer  
We cannot stay this way forever, holding poses for infinity  
The day must progress, with an ever-growing amount of light

Feel the light on your skin, marinate in it each thought  
Recognize the reality of infinity and bear desire for its attainment like a cross  
When the morning light calls, answer, for all you need is the ground.

## Rage

Roxan McKinnon

I know,  
when words retreat  
leaving me  
outside in silence,  
dangerous desires.

## Girl Who Raises Her Hand

Olga Godes

Everytime she speaks she  
sounds like she is about  
to burst in little flushes and  
finally drown.

# The Tale of the Talking Corn

Cheryl Lawton

Early one morning, a young coyote was hunting in the desert. He had searched all night for food, but found nothing. The earth was red and dry. No rain had fallen for many days. When he spied a trail of ants, he followed them to a field where only one green cornstalk remained.

The coyote crept across the hard soil, sniffing the sweet corn and imagining its wonderful taste. He inched closer, and closer. But before he could sink his teeth into the silky tassels, he heard a sound.

"Hoka hey, na, na, na."

The coyote looked up. And down. And all around. At first, he thought it was the wind. But then he realized the corn was talking.

"Hoka hey, na, na, na," the corn chanted. "If you wait, there will be plenty."

The coyote cocked his head. He sniffed the air.

Hmmmm, he thought. Perhaps the other animals will smell the corn, too. If I wait, I may be able to fill my belly. So, he hid under a pile of dry stalks to do just that.

Soon, a flock of black crows landed. They circled around the green ears with the golden silk, fighting over which one would eat first.

"Caw," said the biggest crow. "The corn is mine."

"No, no," said another.

"Mine, mine," said a third.

They flew closer, and closer, until their black feathers were so

close, they almost tickled the coyote's nose. He opened his eyes. He held his breath. He kept his legs still. Until it was just the right time....

But the crows were faster.

"Hoka hey, na, na, na," the corn sang, as the birds flew away. "If you wait, there will be plenty."

"AAAAhoooooooooo," the coyote howled. "I almost had them."

Before the sun grew hot, two jack rabbits peeked out of their hole. At the sight of the unguarded corn, the brothers raced across the field. When the older one reached the stalk first, the younger one got angry. He started a fight.

The brothers rolled and tumbled, the older teasing the younger, as they came closer to the coyote. Closer and closer, until their tails were almost in his mouth. This time, the coyote opened his eyes. He held his breath and he stayed very, very still.

Until the wind changed direction, and the brothers caught his scent.

"Hoka hey, na, na, na," the corn hummed after the rabbits raced home.

"I know, I know," the coyote barked. "If I wait, there will be plenty." Hungrier than ever, he found a new place to hide.

Soon, a large javelina trotted by looking for a spiky cactus to eat. Smelling the ripe corn,

he headed for the field instead. "Oooooohhhh," he said, eyeing the single stalk. "I hope there is enough for me. I am very hungry."

While the javelina was busy thinking about the delicious corn, the coyote slinked closer, and closer, until he was only one foot away. This time, he stood very, very, very still, and when he opened his mouth, an ant crawled onto his tongue.

Coughing, the coyote poked his head through the dry stalks.

"Hoka hey, na, na, na," the corn said as the pig cantered away.

The coyote scratched his ear. "The very next animal that comes along will be my LUNCH."

Hours later, after the sun had traveled across the sky, a mule deer emerged from the canyon. Flicking her short tail, she stopped at the edge of the field. She walked toward the corn, sniffing with her nose and listening with her large ears.

Ever watchful, she walked closer, and closer, until she was close enough for the coyote to bite. And he would have!

If he hadn't drifted off to sleep.

"Hoka hey, na, na, na," the corn laughed, as the deer leaped over his curled body.

Meanwhile, the ants went about their work. They traveled in long lines, carrying dirt and grass, building hill after hill, fighting, working, marching and moving, hauling, towing and pulling, drag-

ging kernels and bits of stalk one hundred times their size into the storerooms below ground, until, at last, the corn with the golden silk was gone.

The hungry coyote woke up. He sniffed the hole where the stalk had been. He stretched his paws. He even raised his nose to the rising moon.

"Yip, yip, yipeee," he cried.

"Where are you now, clever corn?"

"Hoka, hey, na, na, na," the corn answered from deep within the soil. "If you wait, there will be plenty."

Growling, the coyote swished his tail and ran off to hunt in the canyon. But each day during the rainy season, he returned. Sometimes, he sniffed the quiet ant hills. Other times, he rooted through the dirt or nibbled on the wet stalks. All winter long, he remembered the corn and its song.

While he waited, the kernels slept in the ants' storerooms, which were built over an underground spring of water. Finally, after days and days of rain and sun, they woke up. Tender shoots broke through the red desert soil. Soon, the field was, once again, filled with stalks of ripe, golden corn.

So many that, when the sun was high and the earth was not quite dry, the corn sang loudly, "Hoka hey, na, na, na."

"Come, my friend. There is plenty...

... for now."

# Conditioning

Rachael Holden

In preschool or kindergarten,  
I was creative, artistic,  
beginning to discover the true versatility of  
that scorned medium,  
the humble Crayola crayon:  
I could shade,  
I could layer colors,  
I could create texture.

Endless  
possibilities, or  
color inside the lines.

I never wanted to stay inside the lines.  
Didn't care about the lines.  
I saw a page of a coloring book  
not as a defined picture for me to fill in,  
but a blank slate onto which I could pour  
my own ideas.  
Ignore the lines,  
along with the reprimands  
I received for my choice.

Color inside the lines.

They stifled the pictures in my head  
of giant monsters  
eating blueberries or  
sassy princesses  
fighting off pirates  
in favor of

Winnie the Pooh  
his paw inside a jar of hunny.  
Slowly I relented,  
self-expression restricted to  
coloring Pooh with Razzle Dazzle Rose,  
his shirt with Vivid Tangerine.  
Still wrong.

No choice but to stifle myself,  
recreate images from what I'd seen,  
match the colors with the front of the book.

I never have quite remembered how to just  
ignore the lines.

111

## Hunger Occupies the Thoughts

Anonymous

And blinds the eye  
Slowly dripping like strings of saliva  
from the dog's mouth  
A hungry beast  
Your mind like a train,  
stuck on one track through the dark of the night.  
A soup of forgotten strangers  
sits blankly inside you.  
Yellow with bile  
grey with anticipation  
waiting for their stop  
for you to digest their bones  
let them sit in the cracks of your teeth  
feasting on your leftovers.

Common thought

We're both children trapped  
in these bodies,

masquerading in  
our grown-up clothes,

and I'm not sure you  
understand how young  
and scared we are.

Still finding, exploring;  
we hardly recognize  
ourselves.

How are we supposed to know another?

You think you have an idea about me—

how I love your hands around  
my waist,

I drink my coffee  
strong and black,

that I never mind when you  
kiss my neck to find the hidden  
ticklish spot there,  
though I laugh until  
I snort each time;

but don't expect me to stay in  
stasis forever,

because I dream about  
the ownership  
ideal.

I want a fairytale.  
I want to belong to someone.

And is wanting so bad in the end?

I've been silent all my life,  
and now these leaves of  
grass are sprouting from my  
doormat,

and I must still bite my tongue, little boy,  
out of deference to you.

## Masquerade

Jennifer Leavey

I wonder if the mail to God  
is bagged with the thousands of letters to Santa,  
if they end up together at the North Pole,  
or just logged somewhere and burned.

I do not believe in God  
but I believe in something big;  
I blow wishes  
into lost eyelashes and candle flames that don't belong to birthdays

I kiss yellow traffic lights  
and find meaning in the line-up of leaves on the sidewalk.  
The clock seems to only show me consecutive digits,  
and my tiniest ideas turn up as motifs.  
I look for my initials  
and sure enough I'll find them.

I'm alone in my looking, so alone in my finding? Or are the invisible just imagined?  
Count  
count  
count  
counting  
the hours awake are listed and counted.

I think too loud:  
Are the signs that I find just another symptom, neurons firing in desperation?  
It's then that I'm filled with:  
hating hypocrisy, saltwater, terror.  
I close my eyes at 12:34, pretend not to notice, skip my counterfeit wish—  
And hope the shooting stars will not turn their guns on me.

The day my mom died at forty-four, I looked out the window to see  
the blustery storm breeze her away like Beth in Little Women  
but the sky was a cloudless blue;  
I closed the shades.

Born in 1913 along with the crossword puzzle,  
at fifteen, my great-grandma Sally saw the invention of sliced bread.  
She outlived Polaroid film, video tapes and floppy disks.  
If she hadn't been in a nursing home, she might have seen an iPad.  
A long life lived, an observer of history,  
Her death's night sky brought a rainbow—  
(open the shades)

## Hunting

Devra Snow





**There's No Place Like Home    Olga Godes**



Call me Ishmael. Or call me Lolita, for that matter. For though I shudder to think of myself as ever having been the light of someone's life, I am certain that I have borne responsibility for the fire burning in someone's loins. A great many someones, if I may be so bold. So, go ahead and call me a joker, call me a fool. Because, right at this moment, I'm totally cool. Clear as a crystal, sharp as a knife, I feel like I'm in the prime of my... Well, you get the point.

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, and once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered, weak and weary, I asked aloud, "When shall we three meet again—in thunder, lightning, or in rain?" And then a vagrant, in the street, turned her head, and answered me, "When the hurlyburly's done, when the battle's lost and won."

I had a dream, I tell you! I had a dream where I told thousands of Germans that I was a jelly donut—Ich bin ein Berliner! I had a dream that I was not a crook, that there would be—Read my lips!—no new taxes. I had a dream that I was back in Berlin, asking Mr. Gorbachev to tear down the wall; that our American values were not luxuries, but necessities—not the

salt on our bread, but the bread itself. I had a dream that our long national nightmare was over. But it's never over, friend, not this one.

I place my left hand on the Bible, raise my right, and repeat after you, "I swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help me God." So, help me God. Help me!

My name is Matthew Silver, and I am an alcoholic.

...and I am a nymphomaniac.

...and, at this point, on the seventh draft of this monstrosity whose pages you are leafing through ever faster, searching for the point, I have so little faith in my ability to construct a complete sentence that I must resort to cheap parlor tricks of language. I must pillage the words of others, remix them, and flip the script, if you will.

But leave me to my own devices, take away my bookshelves and leave me with a composition notebook and a box of sharpened number twos, and see what happens.

...

Nothing, and a whole lot of it.

But I'll try again, of course.

Because I am a writer. And this is what I do.

## The Seventh Draft

E. Christopher Clark